GARRY KASPAROV

Steinitz
Lasker
Capablanca
Alekhine

ON MY GREAT PREDECESSORS

PART I

EVERYMAN CHESS

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a modern history of the
early development of chess
in three volumes

GARRY KASPAROV ON MY GREAT PREDECESSORS
PART I

with the participation of Dmitry Plisetsky

Steinitz
Lasker
Capablanca
Alekhine

EVERYMAN CHESS
Gloucester Publishers plc www.everymanchess.com

First published in 2003 by Everyman Publishers plc, formerly Cadogan Books plc, Gloucester Mansions, 140A Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8HD

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English translation © 2003 Ken Neat

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 1 85744 330 6

Distributed in North America by The Globe Pequot Press, P.O Box 480,
246 Goose Lane, Guilford, CT 06437-0480.

All other sales enquiries should be directed to Everyman Chess, Gloucester Mansions,
140A Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8HD
tel: 020 7539 7600 fax: 020 7379 4060
email: chess@everymanbooks.com
website: www.everymanbooks.com

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EVERYMAN CHESS SERIES (formerly Cadogan Chess)
Chief advisor: Garry Kasparov
Commissioning editor: Byron Jacobs

Translation by Ken Neat.
Proofreading by Ken Whyld and John Emms.
Typesetting and editing by First Rank Publishing, Brighton.
Cover design by Horatio Monteverde.
Production by Navigator Guides.
Printed and bound in Finland by WS Bookwell.

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INTRODUCTION

The Champions as Symbols of their Time

For quite some time I have been wanting to write a book on the new and modern history of chess. And moreover, deviating from the traditional approach, to demonstrate the continuous progress of the game through the play of the world champions. Since it is this elite group of super-stars (only 14 in 117 years!) that has made the greatest contribution to chess: to win the supreme title, they had to overcome the best of the best, discover something new, and catch highly experienced and talented opponents unawares.

According to official legend, a slow war game not unlike chess originated nearly two thousand years ago in India, and, undergoing slight changes, made the endlessly long journey through the south of Central Asia, Persia and the Arab countries of the Middle East, to the Iberian Peninsula. However, the 'Indian' version of the origin of chess became known to Europeans only at the end of the 17th century. Only one thing can he stated with certainty: *modern chess* originated in the 15th century on the Mediterranean. And this is already a purely European invention – an intellectual game, modelling psychological warfare.

The best chess masters of every epoch have been closely linked with the values of the society in which they lived and worked. All the changes of a cultural, political and psychological background are reflected in the style and ideas of their play. This deep connection can be traced back a long time. Was it not logical that, in the era of the Renaissance, in the 15th-17th centuries, chess developed most rapidly in Spain and Italy? Was it an accident that the first maestro, who tried to create a theory of positional play, lived in the epoch of the Enlightenment and of the philosophy of rationalism – the great François-André Philidor (incidentally, a well-known composer and a friend of Diderot)? And remember the slogan that he proclaimed in the middle of the 18th century – 'The pawns are the soul of chess!' Do we not hear in this echoes of the coming Great French Revolution?

Later, in the first half of the 19th century, in full accordance with geopolitical reality, chess was the arena for battles between the best players from England and France: McDonnell-La Bourdonnais, Staunton-Saint-Amant... In the middle of the century the outstanding chess romantic Adolf Anderssen was the leading player. His style was that of reckless attacks on the king, with mind-boggling sacrifices, personifying the triumph of mind over matter (fully typical of an educated German, and not alien to the ideas of Hegel and Schopenhauer).

We also remember the brilliant flight of the American super-genius Paul Morphy, who in a couple of years (1857-59) conquered both the New and the Old Worlds. He revealed a thunderous blend of pragmatism, aggression and accurate calculation to the world – qualities that enabled America to accomplish a powerful spurt in the second half of the 19th century.

The London international tournament of 1883 intrigued the public: who was in fact the stronger – Wilhelm Steinitz or Johann Hermann Zukertort? And in 1886 (only after Morphy's death!) they finally met in an official match for the title 'Champion of the World'. That was how this title arose – the result of public recognition of the result of a match between the two strongest players on the planet. Running through the fourteen champions of the world, we again observe an inseparable link between chess and social surroundings.

Wilhelm Steinitz (world champion 1886-1894)

Steinitz effectively dominated chess from the early 1870s. He was an ardent follower of the scientific method, which could, in his opinion, provide the key to the solving of any problems arising on the chessboard. He was the first to divide a position into its component elements, to pick out its most important factors, and to state the general principles of strategy. This was a great discovery, a turning point in chess history! But in practice Steinitz often overestimated the importance of the theory of positional play he had created, and relied excessively on abstract principles. Well, he was a true child of his materialistic time, when there prevailed a naïve belief in the omnipotence of science and in the inevitability that soon all natural processes would be completely understood.

Emanuel Lasker (world champion 1894-1921)

A native of Germany, a Doctor of philosophy and mathematics, Lasker was the first, and at that time the only player to appreciate the importance of psychological factors. While being an excellent tactician and strategist, at the same time he realised that the art of exploiting the opponent's deficiencies was sometimes far more important than the ability to make the most correct moves. A deep knowledge of human psychology and an understanding of the relative value of chess strategy helped him to win almost all the events in which he competed, and to retain the title of champion for 27 long years. An absolute record! And who at that time were the masters of thinking? Of course, Einstein and Freud! As they say, commentary is superfluous...

José Raúl Capablanca (world champion 1921-1927)

'The chess machine' – this was what the Cuban genius was called, on account of the purity of his playing style. A favourite with the public, he was a person of refined manners and a man of the world. The great Capa crushed his opponents in an apparently offhand manner, with exquisite ease and elegance. Also attractive was the fact that he gained his brilliant victories apparently without any serious preparatory work on chess. But now remember that time – the years of hope and optimism, when the world was enjoying the peace and quiet after the horrors of the First World War. It was at that time that the global export of American cultural values began – from literary bestsellers to Hollywood productions. Stories involving successful heroes, with dazzling smiles and invariable happy endings, healed the wounds of the recent war. And Capa, a successful socialite and a spoilt child of fortune, corresponded excellently with the spirit of the times.

Alexander Alekhine (world champion 1927-1935, 1937-1946)

The product of a rich noble family – and at the same time the first champion of Soviet Russia! Even before this he had known much sorrow in the hard times of war and revolution. Then came emigration to France, the diploma of Doctor of Law, the grandiose battle with Capablanca, years of travelling, victories and defeats, the Second World War, tournaments in occupied Europe, then accusations of collaboration with the Nazis and the threat of disqualification... Alekhine's style was the embodiment of psychological aggression. Enormous preparatory work, explosive energy at the board, and a maniacal striving to finish off the opponent, together with rich combinative imagination. All this amazingly resembles the devastating wars that shook Europe in the first half of the 20th century. Towards the end, the pendulum of Alekhine's life was about to swing back: the new Soviet champion Botvinnik officially challenged him to a match for the world crown. However, the king died prematurely, thus remaining undefeated.

Max Euwe (world champion 1935-1937)

A symbol of the age of scientific and technological revolution, the start of the era of atomic energy and the computer. An earnest follower and populariser of the teachings of Steinitz, 'a pragmatist, who studied everything that had been published in chess,' Euwe was also a Doctor of Mathematics and a prominent specialist in electronics; at one time he was chairman of the Euroatom commission on chess programming. He was the first of the chess kings to become President of FIDE (1970), not without the influence of Botvinnik, who thought that 'only a chessplayer who has been world champion can understand the importance of the firm and just rules for conducting competitions for the world championship.'

Mikhail Botvinnik (world champion 1948-1957, 1958-1960, 1961-1963)

From his youth a staunch communist. The cold, merciless style of the Patriarch of the Soviet Chess School, based on deep opening and psychological preparation – is this not a symbol of the might of the Stalin regime! In order to play at the highest level, Botvinnik studied chess very seriously, scientifically and professionally. He was champion in the initial years of the Cold War, when sport emerged into the world political arena, and was transformed into an instrument in the ideological battle between East and West. But professional sport was then only in its infancy, while science was being drawn into atomic, cosmic and computer ventures. I should remind you that Botvinnik was a Doctor of Technology and one of the pioneers of chess programming.

Vasily Smyslov (world champion 1957-1958)

Undoubtedly a symbol of the early thaw, the comparatively libertarian era. The death of Stalin, the 20th Communist Party Congress, the start of the rehabilitation of the victims of repression, the world youth festival in Moscow... Onto the chess throne climbed a mild, intelligent man with a fine baritone voice, who had dreamed of a singing career. He was not a communist, and his deep religiousness as though anticipated the approaching rebirth of the Orthodox Church. In addition, Smyslov's style was much lighter and more airy compared with Botvinnik's tank-like onslaught. These giants played three matches against each other! Alas, Smyslov, who was then clearly the strongest player in the world, did not hold the championship for long: the previous era did not want to give way.

Mikhail Tal (world champion 1960-1961)

Although his tenure of the championship lasted a record short time, Tal undoubtedly remains one of the brightest stars in the history of chess. His daring, risky style with its stunning combinations and sacrifices, his youth, irrepressible optimism and wit – all this reflected the hopes of Soviet society, which had barely awoken after the darkness of Stalinism and had eagerly breathed a gulp of freedom in the Khrushchev thaw. Tal became champion in 1960, but his sparkling play won over the public as early as 1956. His victory over Botvinnik was the triumph of a restless poet over a cold materialistic technician (in 1951 Bronstein had come close to this, but the time had not yet arrived). But in the return match held a year later the young romantic had no chance of success against the 'bulwark of the Soviet system'. Incidentally, it was in 1961 that the first signs of the ending of the thaw appeared. The hard-line supporters had triumphed...

Tigran Petrosian (world champion 1963-1969)

The ideal son of his time, who replaced Botvinnik. This was the period of the 'early Brezhnev', a time of the methodical tightening of the screws. The proceedings against Brodsky, the trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the complete stifling of freedom of speech... Belief in communist ideals lessened, and its place was taken by conformism, reticence, caution and discretion. And for Petrosian, with his difficult childhood, sober prudence and enormous natural talent, these qualities were present in full measure.

Boris Spassky (world champion 1969-1972)

A kind of Soviet dandy, the master of the spectacular attack, a natural actor on the chess stage. Also a great talent, but at the same time a bold and independent person, known for his caustic, unprejudiced comments. In contrast to other celebrities, he never clung to power, did not try to get anything out of it and never tried to squeeze political capital out of his name. Spassky's dissident behaviour, like that of a number of prominent figures in science and culture, reflected the growing hostility of the post-Stalin generation of Soviet people to the decaying regime. A new wave of emigration began... In 1976 Spassky also escaped to freedom, married a French woman and moved to a suburb of Paris. But he was deprived of the red flag and his stipend from the USSR Sports Committee only after Linares 1983, where the former world champion took first place, ahead of the current champion Karpov.

Robert James Fischer (world champion 1972-1975)

The most restless and ambiguous champion. By achieving unprecedented successes he became a living legend. Fischer's energetic style is that of a 'killer at the chessboard': monstrous purposefulness, furious pressure, sweeping away everything in its path... The lone genius challenged the formidable Soviet Chess School – and, to the delight of the West, he won! He firmly and uncompromisingly demanded improvements in playing conditions, and respect for chess and chessplayers. Fischer modernised practically all aspects of the ancient game and could well have implemented its conversion onto professional lines. But due to certain traits of his character and his extreme individualism, in the end he became a recluse and slipped out of the onward process of chess development. A pity, since it could have been brought onto a fundamentally different level only by Fischer – an outstanding contemporary of the Beatles, hippies and mass disturbances by students, demanding greater individual freedom...

Anatoly Karpov (world champion 1975-1985)

Karpov's powerful instinct for survival, multiplied by his unique chess talent, gave birth to a super-solid alloy of Lasker's psychological refinement with Capablanca's impeccable, machine-like technique. A favourite of Brezhnev and a vivid symbol of 'stagnation' – the last decade of the regime, when the USSR invaded Afghanistan, and the party authorities, hiding behind the screen of the decayed ideology, did everything to engage in personal enrichment. Precisely during these years the International Chess Federation (FIDE) became an organisation run by the countries of the socialist camp and the Third World, and effectively by the Soviet Union and its world champion Anatoly Karpov. Corruption, stagnation, cynicism and conformism – these were the typical features of Soviet reality in the twilight communist era. But the West accepted the idea of the peaceful coexistence of the two systems and was ready to live with double standards for a long time yet. The two matches for the world crown between Karpov and Korchnoi (1978 and 1981) are an excellent illustration of that period. Korchnoi, even after becoming a Westerner and enlisting the support of the free world, was unable to withstand the heartless might of the Soviet machine.

Garry Kasparov (world champion 1985-2000)

I see my own style as being a kind of symbiosis of the styles of Alekhine, Tal and Fischer. I became champion in the historic year of 1985, the first year of Gorbachev's perestroika, which led to the break-up of the USSR and a fundamental change in the map of the world. A storm of change swept the planet, overturning the lives of millions of people. In chess too the old order could not survive. After a number of desperate attempts to reanimate the past (a further three matches with Karpov!), it nevertheless broke away on a new path and is aiming to become one of the main types of professional sport. However, many changes still lie ahead – both in chess, and in the world as a whole.

Vladimir Kramnik (world champion 2000-?)

On the border of the 20th and 21st centuries, in Russia, and also in the West, it became the time of the pragmatic market and questions such as 'What is your company worth?' or 'How much are your shares?' And there came into chess a person who personified this approach with his style of play and life. The champion-like scale of his talent was evident back in the early-90s, when I insisted on the inclusion of Volodya in the Russian Olympiad team, but his chess style reached completion only by the time of our match in 2000. This is the height of pragmatism, a quaint synthesis of the psychological insight of Lasker, the deep opening preparation of Botvinnik and the extraordinary tenacity of Karpov, whose collection of games was Kramnik's bedside book...

A truly symbolic place for the history of chess is Prague – a city where in May 1836 the first world champion Steinitz was born, and where in May 2002 the FIDE President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, together with the 13th and 14th champions, signed a 'Resolution for uniting the chess world'. A line was thereby drawn under the historic dispute regarding to whom the title 'Champion of the World' belongs: as a result of the unification, the only rightful owner and the only organisation, staging the official world championships, remains FIDE. This was a serious, but necessary concession on the part of the champions: today there is no other way of attracting money into chess from big corporations and of ensuring a decent living for hundreds of professionals.

Next in turn is the creation of dynamic system for conducting the world championship – a two-year cycle, consisting of a qualifying knock-out tournament, quarter-final and semi-final candidates matches and a match for the world championship of 12 games; moreover, the champion will now join in at the semi-final stage, and subsequently even at the quarter-final.

To all appearances, the former significance and symbolism of the title 'Champion of the World' will fade into the past. What can be done? The rapid acceleration in the tempo of life, and the overall computerisation and commercialisation also exert an enormous influence on chess. Its development is entering a new stage – the practical realisation of accumulated ideas, and at the forefront is the competitive element. It is possible that my match with Kramnik (London 2000) will be the last to make serious changes to our understanding of the game...

Tal once made the fair comment that the history of the battle for the world championship is created not only by the champions, but also by their brilliant rivals. And indeed, apart from the world champions there is another small elite group of players who have played an enormous role in the development of chess (some of them were very close to the supreme title and did not win it, perhaps only due to mysterious caprices of fate). One remembers the names of Zukertort, Chigorin, Tarrasch, Pillsbury, Schlechter, Rubinstein, Nimzowitsch, Réti, Keres, Bronstein, Geller, Larsen, Polugayevsky, Korchnoi... Of course, their fates are also inseparable from their times, and I will endeavour to talk at least briefly about each of these chess giants.

But now it is time to be on our way. Awaiting you is a wonderful collection of masterpieces, created by the best chessplayers in the world and studied under the microscope of the latest analytical computer programs; hence – a great number of amazing finds and discoveries. I hope that this work will make it possible to see the colossal evolution of chess during the past one hundred and fifty years, which is fully comparable with scientific and technological progress.

I hope also that my book will interest not only professionals and inveterate chess enthusiasts, but also those who are not yet imbued with a deep love for this ancient, truly royal game.

Garry Kasparov
April 2003

CHAPTER ONE

Chess before Steinitz

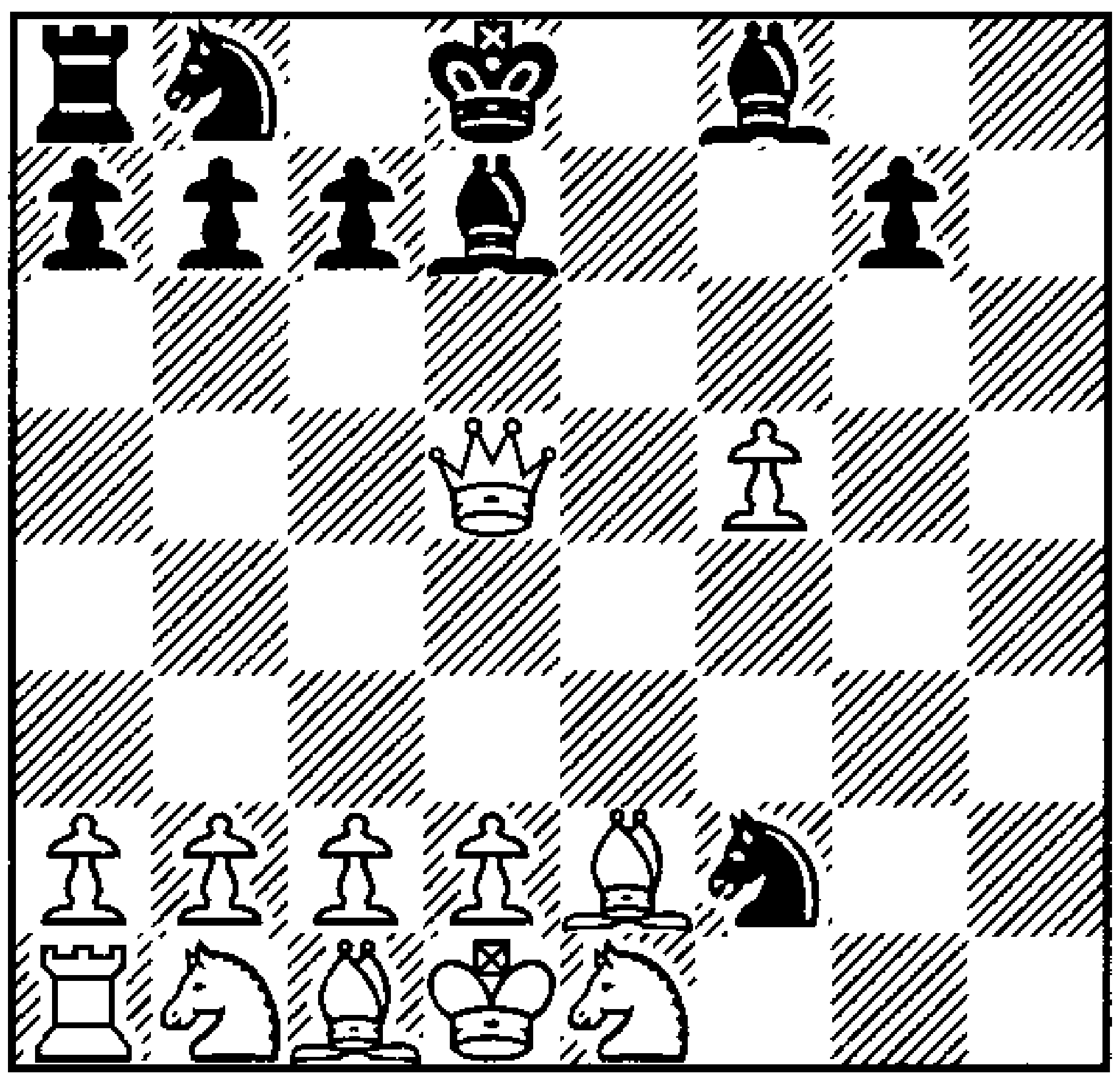
The stages in the development of chess resemble the path taken by everyone who proceeds from a beginner to a player of high standard. Initially they all unconsciously reproduce the manner of play in the 16th and 17th centuries: never missing a chance to give check, bring the queen immediately into play and, not thinking about the development of all the pieces, launch a dashing attack on the king. The combination either succeeds, or suddenly turns out to be completely incorrect. The level of defence is terrible and there is a complete absence of any deep plan.

This style, inspired by the talent and imagination of the performers, became known in chess as the 'Italian School'. A manuscript of its legendary representative Gioacchino Greco (1600-1634) is full of miniatures resembling those that occur with all novices:

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♕f6? 3 ♗c4 ♕g6 4 0-0 ♕xe4? 5 ♗xf7+! ♔e7 6 ♖e1 ♕f4 7 ♖xe5+ ♔xf7 8 d4 ♕f6 9 ♘g5+ ♔g6 10 ♕d3+ ♔h5 11 g4+ and mate;

1 e4 e6 2 d4 ♘f6?! 3 ♗d3 ♘c6 4 ♘f3 ♗e7 5 h4 0-0? 6 e5 ♘d5 7 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 8 ♘g5+ ♗xg5 9 hxg5+ ♔g6 10 ♕h5+ ♔f5 11 ♕h7+ g6 12 ♕h3+ ♔e4 13 ♕d3 mate;

1 e4 e5 2 f4 f5?! 3 exf5 ♕h4+ 4 g3 ♕e7 5 ♕h5+?! (5 fxe5! ♕xe5+ 6 ♕e2 is better) 5...♔d8 6 fxe5 ♕xe5+ 7 ♗e2 (7 ♕e2! ♕xf5 8 ♗h3) 7...♘f6 8 ♕f3 d5 9 g4? h5! 10 h3? hxg4 11 hxg4 ♖xh1 12 ♕xh1 ♕g3+ 13 ♔d1 ♘xg4 14 ♕xd5+ ♗d7 15 ♘f3 ♘f2+ 16 ♔e1 ♘d3+ 17 ♔d1 ♕e1+ 18 ♘xe1 ♘f2 mate.



What is this, if not a monument to the era! Just take a look at White's queenside...

However, Greco also has some theoretically valuable variations – for example, a famous attack with a rook sacrifice in the Italian Game: 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 c3 ♘f6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 ♗b4+ 7 ♘c3 ♘xe4 8 0-0 ♘xc3 (8...♗xc3!) 9 bxc3 ♗xc3? (9...d5 is better) 10 ♕b3 (10 ♗a3! is even stronger) 10...♗xa1? (10...d5!) 11 ♗xf7+! ♔f8 12 ♗g5 ♘e7 13 ♘e5! ♗xd4 (or 13...d6 14 ♗g6!) 14

♗g6! d5 15 ♕f3+ ♗f5 16 ♗xf5 ♗xe5 17 ♗e6+ ♗f6 18 ♗xf6 and wins.

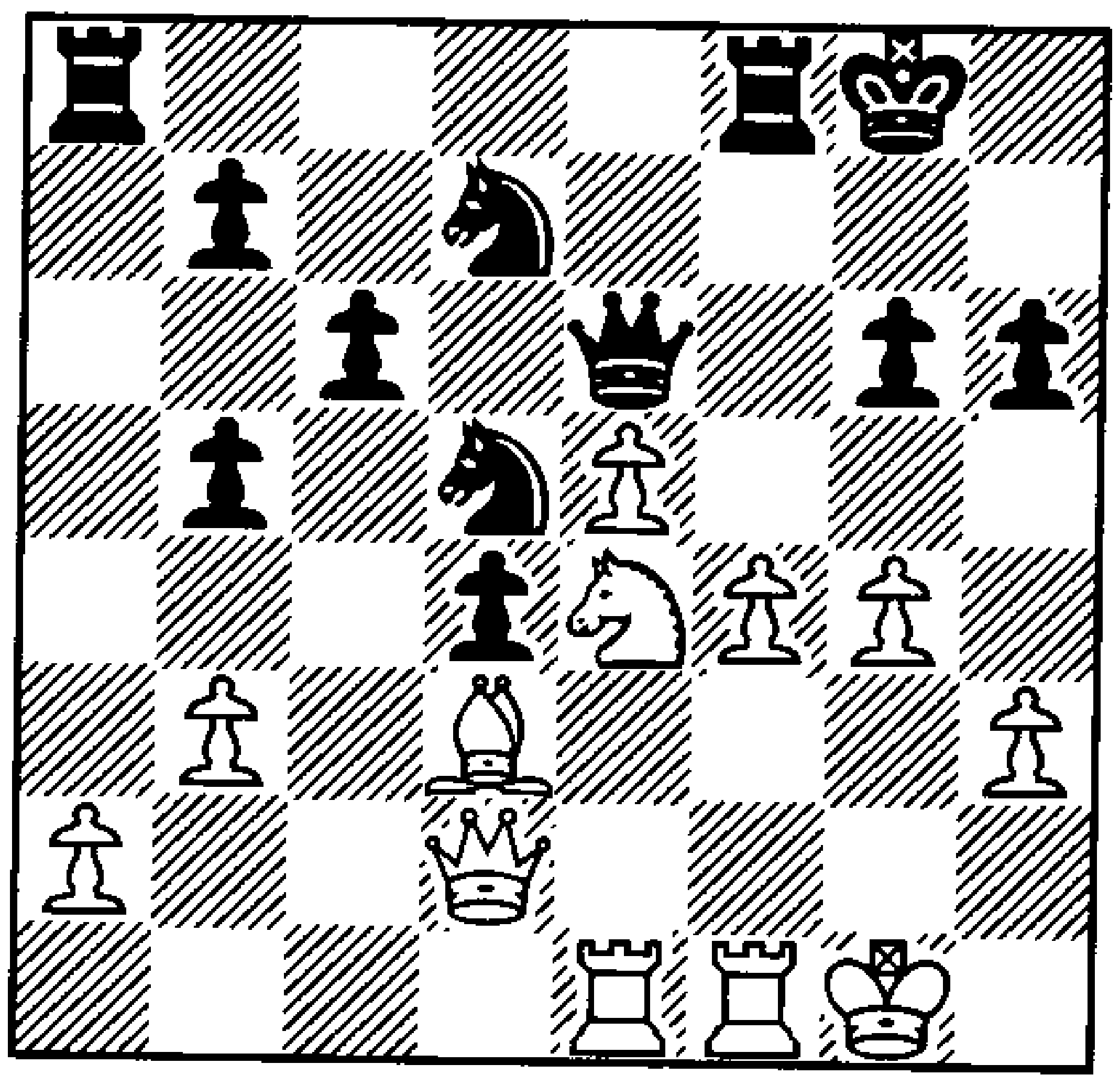
'The masters of that time,' writes Lasker, 'found a sound and fruitful plan: disregarding pawns, achieve a rapid development of the pieces for a swift attack on the enemy king. To oppose this, a counter-plan was worked out: develop the pieces in solid positions, accept the sacrifices and then win thanks to material superiority. The masters of the first type found and carried out brilliant combinations, whereas the masters of the second type devised the systematic exchange as a means of weakening and in the end parrying the attack. The masters of the first type were the inventors of gambits, whereas the second type discovered the Giuoco Piano (*i.e. 'quiet play' in the Italian Game: 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 d3 or 4 ♘c3 – Garry Kasparov, subsequently referred to as G.K.*), the fianchetto and the Sicilian Defence.' Who could have known then that the modest 'Sicilian' would become the main and sharpest opening of our times?

The gambit-combinative mood reigned in chess until the mid-18th century, until the appearance of François-André Danican Philidor (1726-1795), an outstanding player and, incidentally, a well-known composer, one of the founders of French comic opera. In his youth Philidor used to visit the Café de la Régence in Paris, where he learned the game from the strongest French player Legall (who does not remember the famous mate which bears his name: 1 e4 e5 2 ♗c4 d6 3 ♘f3 ♗g4 4 ♘c3 g6? 5 ♘xe5! ♗xd1 6 ♗xf7+ ♔e7 7 ♘d5 mate). In a match in 1747 he crushed the talented Syrian player Stamma, the inventor of the algebraic notation and the author of a popular collection of 100 problem and study positions (1737).

Philidor was so much stronger than his contemporaries, that from that point until the end of his life he played them all, only by giving away odds. Therefore the most significant chess event of the era was not his victories at the board, but his creation of an absolutely innovatory manual *L'analyse du jeu des Échecs* (1749, 1777, altogether about 100 editions!). Philidor was the first to subject the openings to a systematic, scientific study and to draw up certain general playing principles.

As a counter to the reckless piece attacks in the style of the Italian School, which in the 18th century were personified by the masters from Modena – Lolli, del Rio and Ponziani, he was the first to put forward a *positional plan*, based on a distinctive pawn theory: 'Pawns are the soul of chess; on their correct or bad arrangement depends the success of attack or defence; the art of playing with them decides the fate of the game.'

Pawns in front, pieces to the rear – this, expressed briefly, was Philidor's plan. I will give a typical example from *L'analyse*, illustrating this argument.



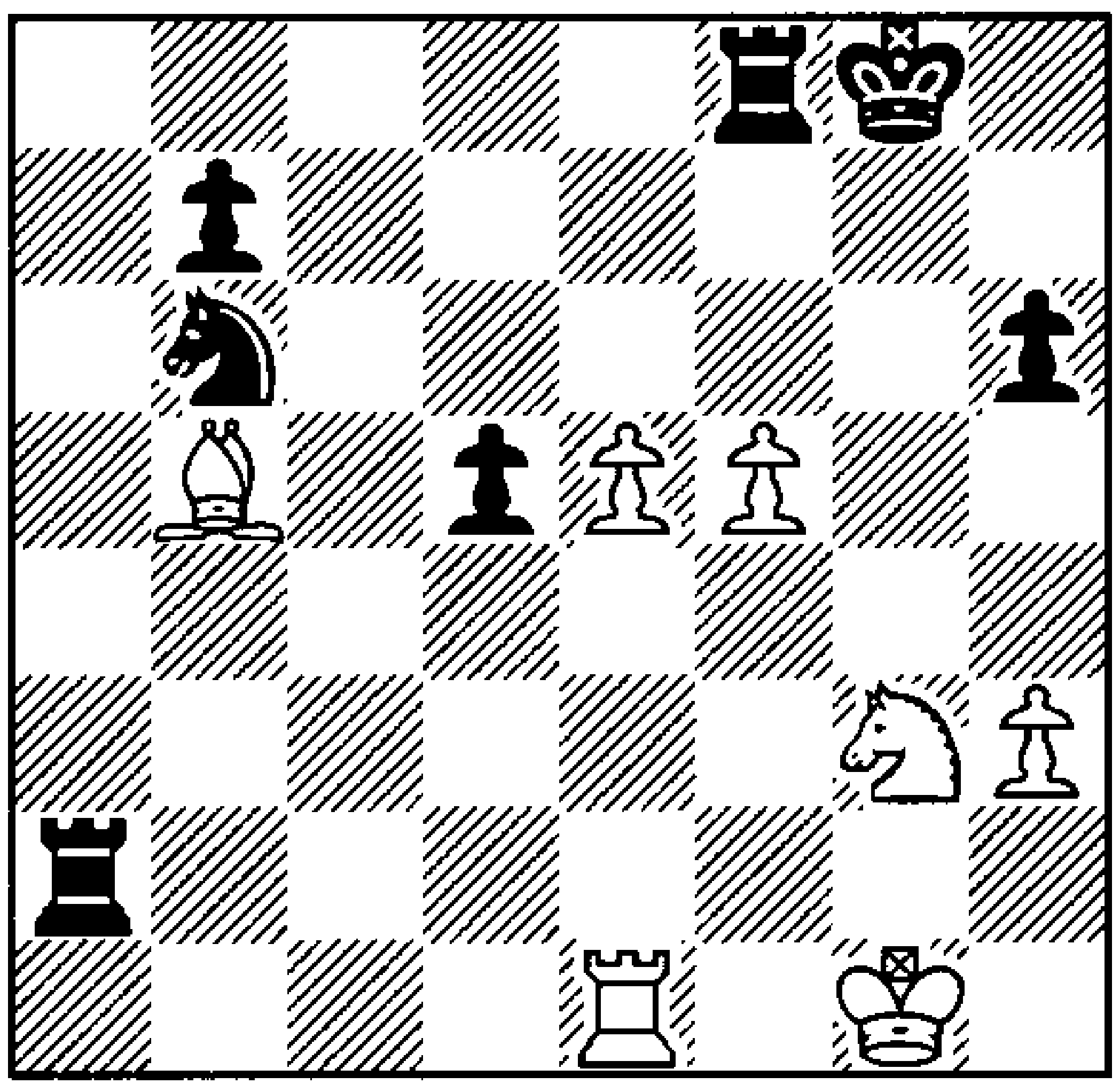
23 ♘g3 (with the unequivocal threat of f4-f5) **23...♘e3**

The knight advances to cut off communications between [the white] pieces and break the strength of [his] pawns; which he would undoubtedly do, by pushing his g-pawn; but [White] prevents him by sacrificing [his] rook.' (Philidor)

24 ♖xe3! dxe3 25 ♕xe3 ♖xa2 (the inhibiting 25...♖ae8 would appear to be more tenacious, although here too White has an appreciable advantage) **26 ♖e1!**

'So that the e5- pawn should not be left in the lurch when f4-f5 is played.' (Philidor)

26...♕xb3 27 ♕e4 ♕e6 28 f5! gxf5 29 gxf5 (here it is, Philidor's dream!) **29...♕d5 30 ♕xd5+ cxd5 31 ♗xb5** (White does not even have a pawn for the exchange, but his pair of connected passed pawns is very strong) **31...♘b6**



32 f6 'If you have a light-squared bishop, you should place your pawns on dark squares; if a dark-squared bishop, then on light squares. Since then your bishop will prevent the enemy pieces from establishing themselves between your pawns.' One of the classic rules of Philidor, which was later adopted by Steinitz. **32...♖b2 33 ♗d3 ♔f7 34 ♗f5 ♘c4 35 ♘h5** (with the unavoidable e5-e6) **35...♖g8+ 36 ♗g4 ♘d2 37 e6+ ♔g6 38 f7.** 'Then the pawn (e6) promotes to a queen and White wins.' For example, 38...♖f8 39 ♘f4+ ♔g7 40 ♗h5 and e6-e7.

Philidor discovered the eternal principle of the coordination of the forces – 'genuine attacks are carried out by the united efforts of many pieces' (in this respect his best pupil was Morphy) – and he formulated several other valuable rules:

1. 'An attack should never be begun before the pawns leading it are thoroughly supported' (and they should be deployed in a compact chain – a phalanx).
2. 'Pawns, especially central ones, that have advanced to the fifth rank, lose part of their strength, since then they can easily be attacked by the enemy pawns from the sixth rank' (a direct panegyric upon the Alekhine Defence!).
3. 'It is always advantageous to exchange your f-pawn for the e-pawn, since this leads to the seizure of the centre and, in addition, to the opening of a file for the rook' (the ideology of the King's Gambit and an opening of the 19th century – the Vienna Game).

Play in accordance with the pawn theory was often protracted, concluding deep in the endgame. Philidor's investigative gift vividly displayed itself in this field too: an enormous step forward was provided by his now classical analyses of the endings 'rook and pawn against rook', 'rook and bishop against rook', 'queen against rook and pawn', and so on. It is from typical endgame positions that the *concept of a plan* originates.

However, the problem for the further development of chess was that the great French master was too far ahead of his time: no one was able to play successfully in the manner proposed by him – it all reduced to protracted and fruitless manoeuvring. The chess world was simply not yet ready for the general principles of positional play, especially in closed positions, and for more than half of the 19th century the romantic trend of the Italian School dominated – which, nevertheless, as we shall see, greatly enriched chess.

The First Matches for the Crown

After the death of Philidor, for a long time there was no clearly strongest player in Europe. In the early 1820s the contenders for this role were Frenchman Alexander Louis Deschapelles (1780-1847) and the prominent British chess writer William Lewis (1787-1870). Then it was their pupils who became the leaders – Louis Charles de la Bourdonnais (1795-1840) and Alexander McDonnell (1798-1835).

La Bourdonnais was born into a distinguished noble family, but he gradually squandered his wealth and earned his living from chess alone – in those days this was a thankless occupation even for the very best, and the great maestro was barely able to make ends meet. Although he had studied Philidor's *L'Analyse*, he nevertheless played in a different, intuitive attacking style, in keeping with his own temperament. In the words of Lasker, 'However the adversary chose to march his troops, intrepidly La Bourdonnais followed him and fought for the centre of the board with courage and imagination.'

In 1833 he published a manual *New treatise on the game of chess* (also published later in Russia), where for the first time advice was given on how to work independently with a chess book and learn to calculate variations in the mind. And in 1836 la Bourdonnais founded the world's first chess periodical – the monthly *Le Palamède* (the name of a mythical Greek hero, a participant in the Trojan War, to whom in France the invention of chess was attributed for a long time; in my view, this is indirect evidence of its Mediterranean origin: the myth could well have arisen after the real wars of the 13th-15th centuries).

Back in 1824, on a visit to London, La Bourdonnais crushed the English masters and was proclaimed by his compatriots as 'the greatest chess player in Europe.' The English tolerated this position for 10 years, until the time a worthy opponent to the Frenchman appeared.

The Irishman Alexander McDonnell (1798-1835) was a merchant, the secretary of a respectable trading firm, i.e. quite a prosperous man and, in contrast to La Bourdonnais, a chess amateur. A player of sharp combinative style, from the outset he would launch into a fierce battle and often had to pay for this. One only has to think of his provocative gambit **1 e4 e5 2 f4 exf4 3 ♘f3 g5 4 ♗c4 g4 5 ♘c3?!** (if White does not want to play 5 ♘e5, then the Polerio-Muzio Gambit 5 0-0 really is better) **5...gxf3 6 ♕xf3**. One of his match games with La Bourdonnais continued 6...♗h6 7 d4! ♘c6 8 0-0 ♘xd4? 9 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 10 ♕h5+ ♔g7 11 ♗xf4, and another 6...♘c6 7 d4 ♘xd4 8 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 9 ♕h5+ ♔g7 10 0-0 also with an attack for White, although after 6...d6! 7 d4 ♗e6 the advantage is with Black.

The organiser of the series of six matches between McDonnell and La Bourdonnais was another pupil of William Lewis – George Walker, a theoretician, historian and writer, the founder of the Westminster Club. The famous 'Westminster marathon' (London 1834) was essentially the first battle for the chess crown, the forerunner of official matches for the world championship. The winner, as is well known, was La Bourdonnais: +45 -27 =13 (according to other sources, +44 -30 =14). The following remarkable game has remained for ever as the French master's visiting card.

Game 1
A.McDonnell-L.La Bourdonnais
Fourth match, London 1834, 16th game
Sicilian Defence B32

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3

In the Parisian Café de la Régence they preferred 2 f4 – in his time Deschapelles had asserted that 'any other move is advantageous to Black', and McDonnell several times played this against La Bourdonnais, but after 2...♘c6 3 ♘f3 e6 4 c3 d5 5 e5 f6 and ...♘h6 the Frenchman was more successful (+4 -8 =1). Later Staunton also thought that 2 ♘f3 was a mistake and that 2 f4, as Saint-Amant played against him, was better. But Morphy categorically disagreed with this, calling 2 f4 'a completely incorrect method of play', and the moves 2 ♘f3 and 2 d4 'the strongest'. It is clear, wouldn't you agree, which of these disputants could see into the future...

2...♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 e5!

The exclamation mark is for the breakthrough in time! La Bourdonnais makes a move which became the starting point of a variation developed 150 years(!) later by grandmaster Sveshnikov. The 12th game of the match went 4...♘xd4? 5 ♕xd4 e6 6 ♗c4?!

(6 ♘c3! is more accurate) 6...♘e7 7 ♘c3 ♘c6 8 ♕d1 ♗c5 9 0-0 0-0 with a slightly inferior game.

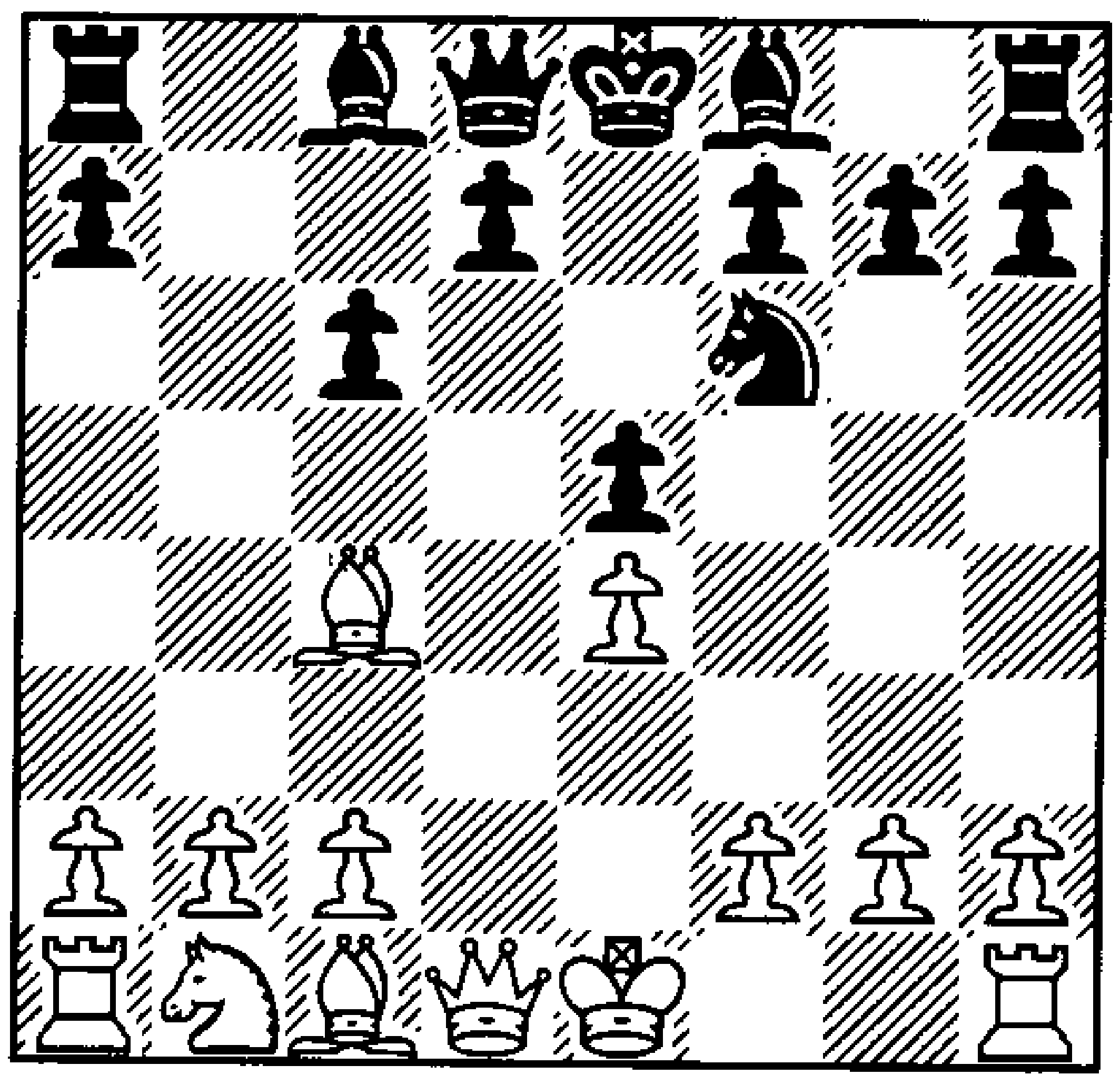
5 ♘xc6

Nowadays every schoolboy knows that 5 ♘b5 should be played. After this from the late 1950s they used to play 5...a6 6 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 7 ♕xd6 ♕f6, for example: 8 ♕d1 (8 ♕a3 or even 8 ♕xf6 ♘xf6 9 ♘c3 is also good) 8...♕g6 9 ♘c3 ♘ge7 10 h4 h5 11 ♗g5 d5 12 ♗xe7 d4 13 ♗g5 dxc3 14 bxc3 ♕xe4+ 15 ♗e2 f6 16 ♗e3 ♗g4 with equality, Fischer-Tal, Curaçao Candidates 1962), but 12 exd5! retains an advantage. Then Sveshnikov showed that 5...d6! 6 c4 ♗e7 is more solid – here White has only a minimal initiative.

However, 5 ♘xc6 is perhaps better than its reputation. In pre-Steinitzian times they aimed for rapid development and an attack, and did not pay attention to such positional nuances as the weakness of the d5-square.

5...bxc6 6 ♗c4 ♘f6

Löwenthal recommended 6...♗a6 (with the idea of 7 ♗xa6 ♕a5+ and ...♕xa6), but after 7 ♘d2 ♗xc4 (or 7...♕a5 8 0-0 ♘f6 9 ♕e2) 8 ♘xc4 ♕e7 9 0-0 ♕e6 10 b3 ♘f6 11 ♗b2 White retains some advantage.



7 ♗g5?!

A futile, anti-positional move: why exchange this bishop? Also harmless is 7 ♕e2 ♗e7 8 ♘c3 0-0 9 ♗g5 ♘xe4 (9...h6!?) 10 ♗xe7 ♘xc3 11 ♕xe5 ♖e8 12 0-0 ♕xe7 13 ♕xc3 d5 14 ♗d3 ♕d6 with equality, as in a previous game of the same match.

But 7 0-0! is more logical. In the well-known game Morphy-Löwenthal (London 1858) after 7...d5?! (7...♘xe4?! 8 ♖e1 d5 is bad because of 9 ♖xe4 dxe4? 10 ♗xf7+!) 8 exd5 cxd5 9 ♗b5+ ♗d7 10 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 11 ♖e1 ♗d6?! 12 ♘c3 (12 ♗g5! is more accurate) 12...e4? (even the superior 12...♕e6 13 ♗g5 ♗b4 14 ♗xf6 gxf6 15 ♘xd5 0-0-0 16 c4 ♗xe1 17 ♕xe1 would have left White with the initiative) 13 ♗g5 Black encountered great difficulties. However, in the event of 7...♗e7! 8 ♘c3 0-0 9 ♕d3 d6 White would have been unable to count on anything. He has a free game, it is true, so the outcome of the opening is acceptable for both sides...

7...♗e7 (the 11th game of the match went 7...♗c5 8 0-0 h6 9 ♗xf6 ♕xf6) **8 ♕e2?!**

I agree with Chigorin, who proposed 8 ♘c3 ♗b7 9 ♕e2 d5 10 ♖d1. After 10...d4 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♘b1 c5 13 ♘d2 ♘d7 Black is alright, but for the moment White too has not yet spoiled anything.

8...d5

This is more energetic than 8...0-0, as recommended by a number of commentators.

9 ♗xf6?

But this is a serious error. 'White could have advantageously simplified the game: 9 exd5 cxd5 10 ♗b5+ ♗d7 11 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 12 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 13 ♘c3 with pressure on the central pawns.' (Neishtadt) Excuse me: after 13...d4 14 ♘d5 ♕d6 15 c4 0-0 16 0-0 ♘b6! this pressure is worthless.

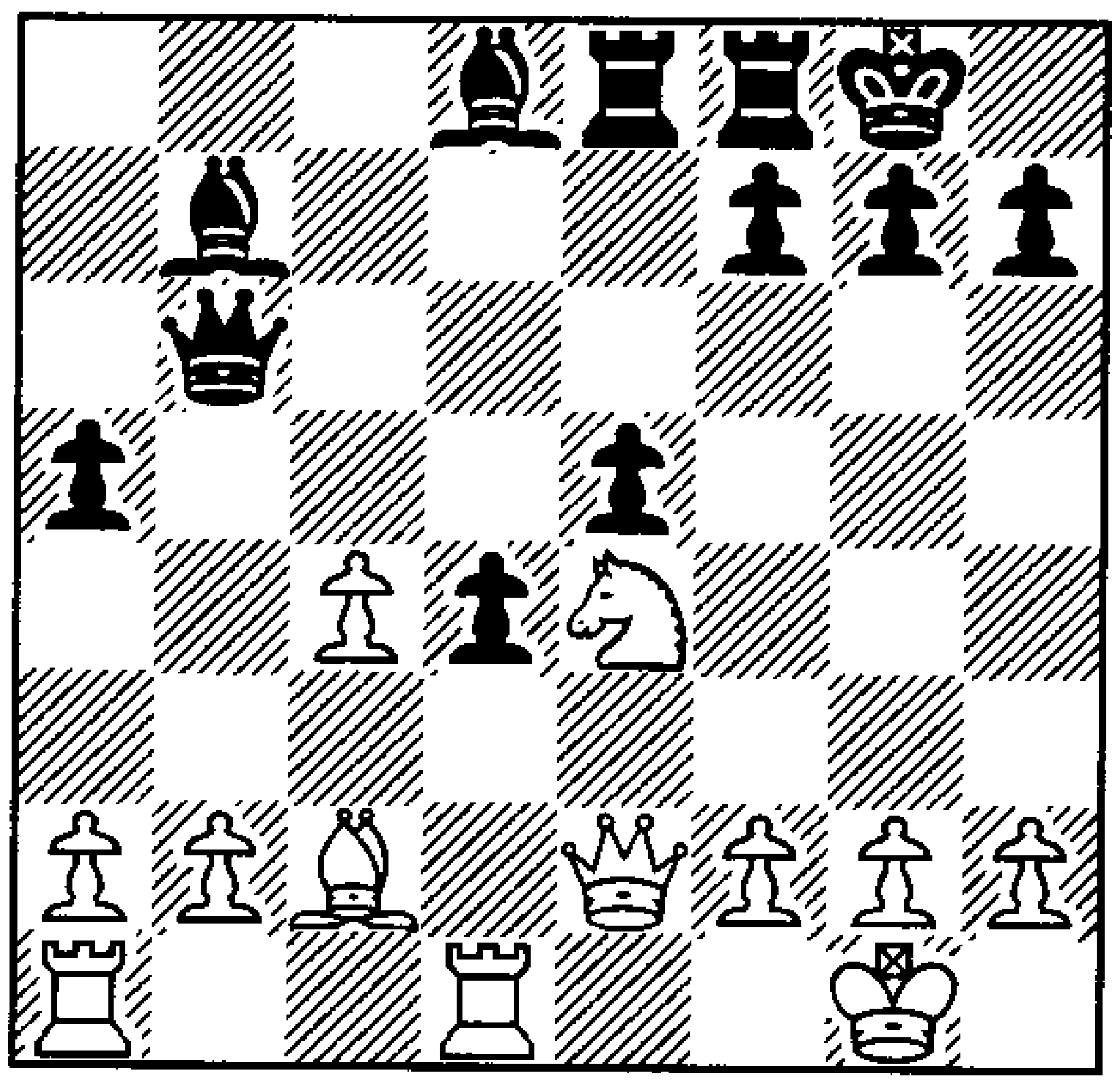
9...♗xf6 10 ♗b3 0-0 11 0-0 a5 (with the threats of 12...a4 and 12...♗a6) **12 exd5 cxd5 13 ♖d1 d4 14 c4?**

Apparently the decisive mistake: it was wrong to allow Black's pawns to become passed, since it does not prove possible to blockade them on the light squares. After 14 ♘d2 a4 15 ♗c4 a3 16 b3 ♗b7 White would simply have stood worse (the opponent has the two bishops, the centre, and so on), but he could still have held on.

14...♕b6 15 ♗c2 ♗b7 16 ♘d2 ♖ae8

The greedy 16...♕xb2? would have thrown away Black's entire advantage: 17 ♕d3 g6 18 ♖ab1 e4! 19 ♘xe4 (19 ♖xb2 exd3 20 ♗xd3 is equal) 19...♗xe4 20 ♖xb2 ♗xd3 with a probable draw.

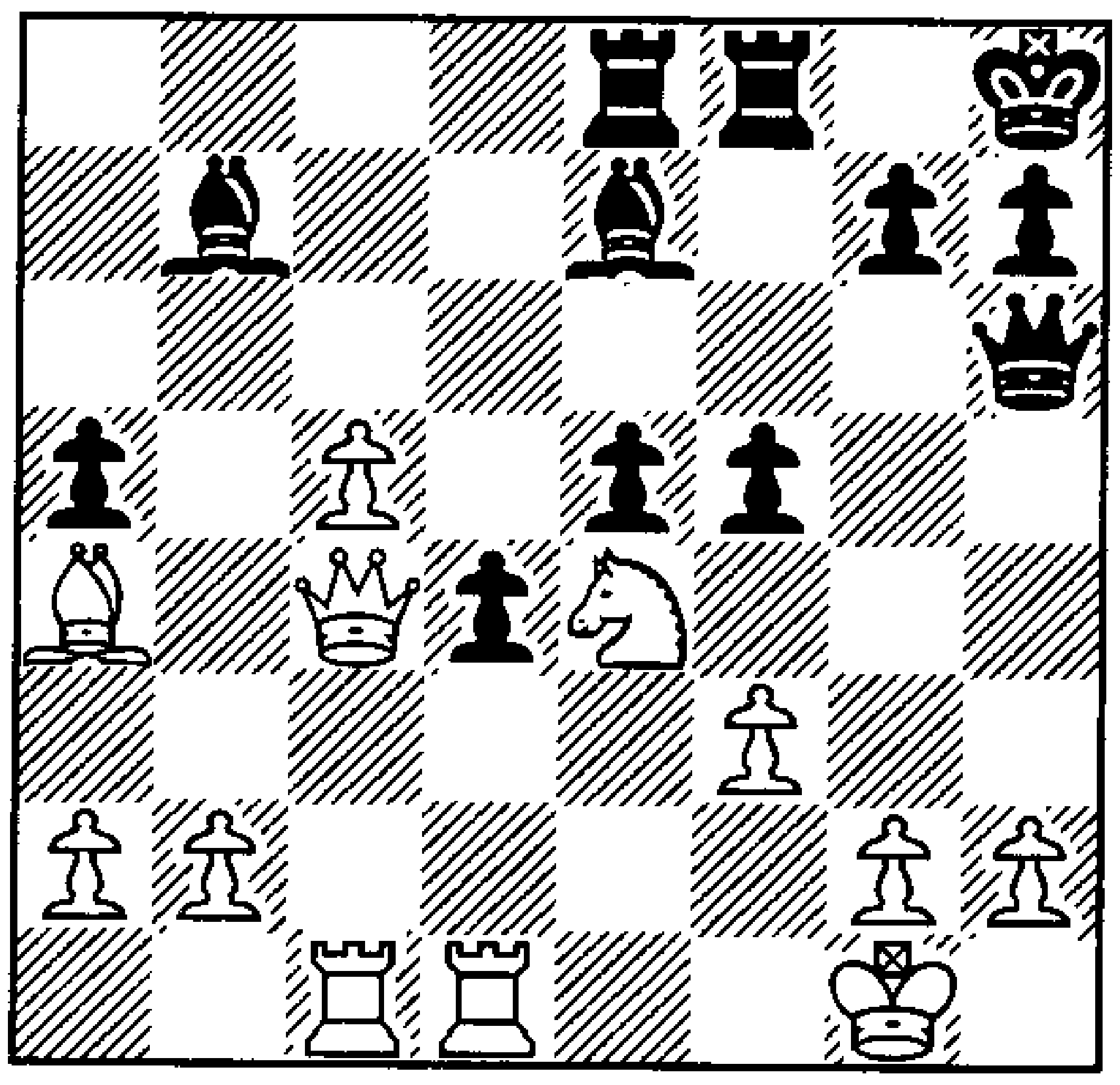
17 ♘e4 (even so, 17 ♗e4!? was more tenacious) **17...♗d8** (17...♗e7!? was also good)



18 c5 ♕c6 19 f3 ♗e7 20 ♖ac1 f5!

The beginning of the end: the bishops are firing from afar, and the pawns break through in the centre, for which Black does not begrudge giving up the exchange!

21 ♕c4+ ♔h8 (but not 21...♕d5? 22 ♕b5 ♗c6 in view of 23 ♗b3 ♗xb5 24 ♗xd5+ ♔h8 25 ♘d6 ♗xd6 26 cxd6 ♖f6 27 ♖c5 ♖b8 28 f4!, when it is now Black who is worse: 28...e4 29 ♗b7! ♗d7 30 ♖xd4! ♖xb7 31 ♖c7 ♖xb2 32 ♖xd7) **22 ♗a4 ♕h6**



23 ♗xe8?

The last possibility of sharpening the play was 23 ♘d6! ♗xd6 24 ♗xe8 (or 24 cxd6 ♖c8 and wins) 24...♗c7 25 c6 e4 26 cxb7 ♕xh2+ 27 ♔f1 exf3 28 gxf3 ♗g3! (Romanovsky only considered 28...♕h3+ 29 ♔e2 ♖xe8+ 30 ♔d3 ♕xf3+ 31 ♔c2 ♕xb7 32 ♕xd4, although even here after 32...h6 Black is slightly better) 29 ♕xd4 ♖xe8, and now not 30 ♖d2? ♕h1+ 31 ♕g1 ♕xf3+ 32 ♖f2 ♗xf2 33 ♕xf2 ♕xb7 with two extra pawns (Neishtadt), but the computer move 30 ♖c3!, and Black still has to work for his win: 30...h5! 31 f4 h4 32 b8♕! ♖xb8 33 ♖d2 ♕h1+ 34 ♔e2 ♕e1+ 35 ♔d3 ♕f1+ 36 ♔c2 ♗xf4 37 ♕f2 ♕xf2 38 ♖xf2 g5 39 ♖xf4 gxf4 40 ♖h3 ♔g7 41 ♖xh4 ♖b4 with a won endgame.

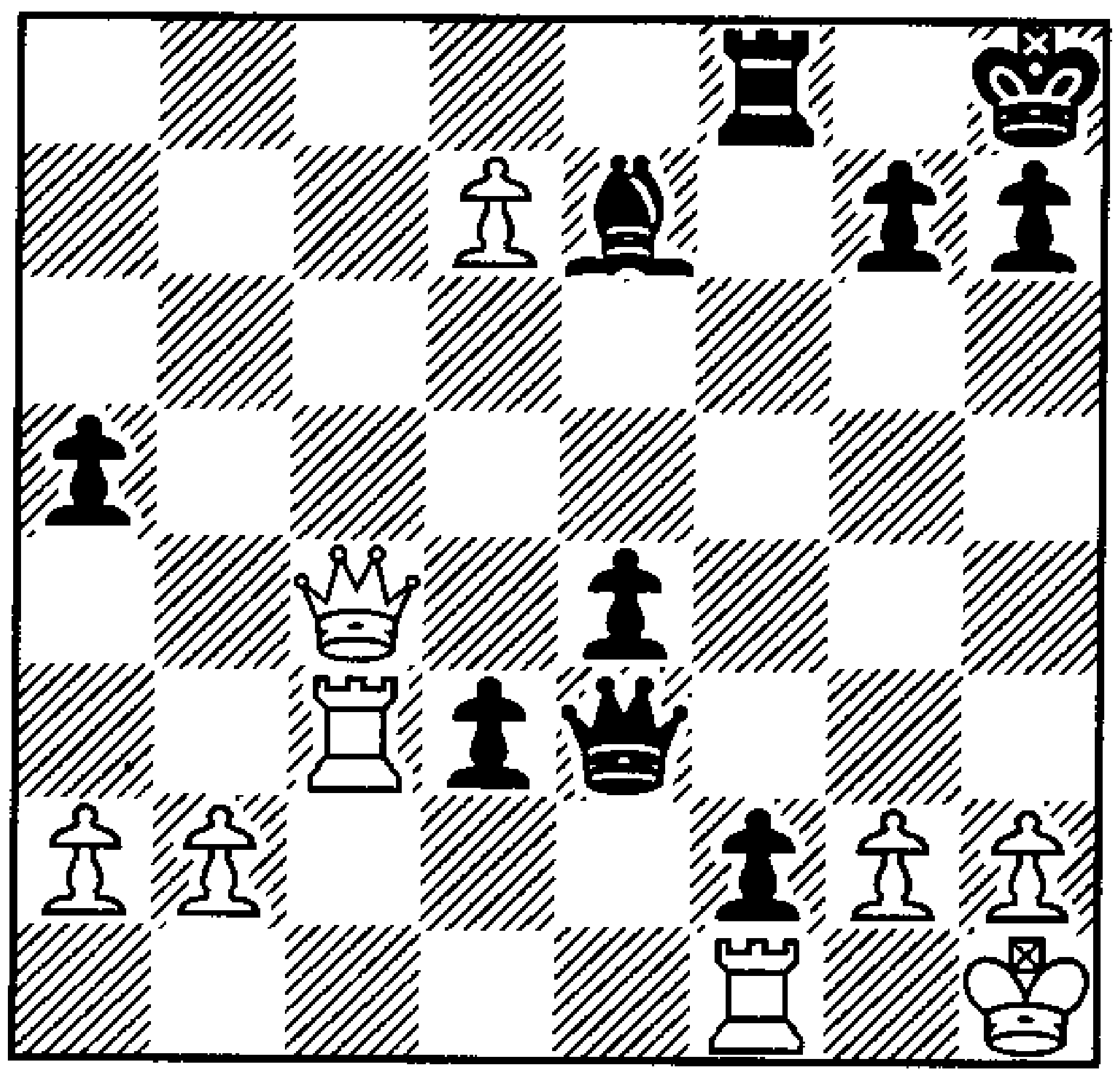
23...fxe4! (the avalanche of passed pawns sweeps away everything in its path) **24 c6** (or 24 ♕b5 ♗a6 25 ♕c6 exf3 26 gxf3 ♕e3+ 27 ♔h1 ♗e2 and wins) **24...exf3 25 ♖c2**

White loses after both 25 cxb7? ♕e3+ 26 ♔h1 fxg2+ 27 ♔xg2 ♖f2+ 28 ♔g1 ♖e2+ and 25 gxf3 ♕e3+ 26 ♔h1 ♕xf3+ 27 ♔g1 ♖f5.

25...♕e3+ 26 ♔h1 ♗c8

The computer also suggests 26...d3 27 ♕xd3 ♕xd3 28 ♖xd3 f2 29 ♖xf2 ♖xf2 30 h3 ♗c8 31 c7 ♖c2 32 ♗c6 g6 winning.

27 ♗d7 f2 (27...d3!?) **28 ♖f1 d3 29 ♖c3 ♗xd7 30 cxd7 e4** (with the threat of 31...♕e2 32 ♖cc1 e3)



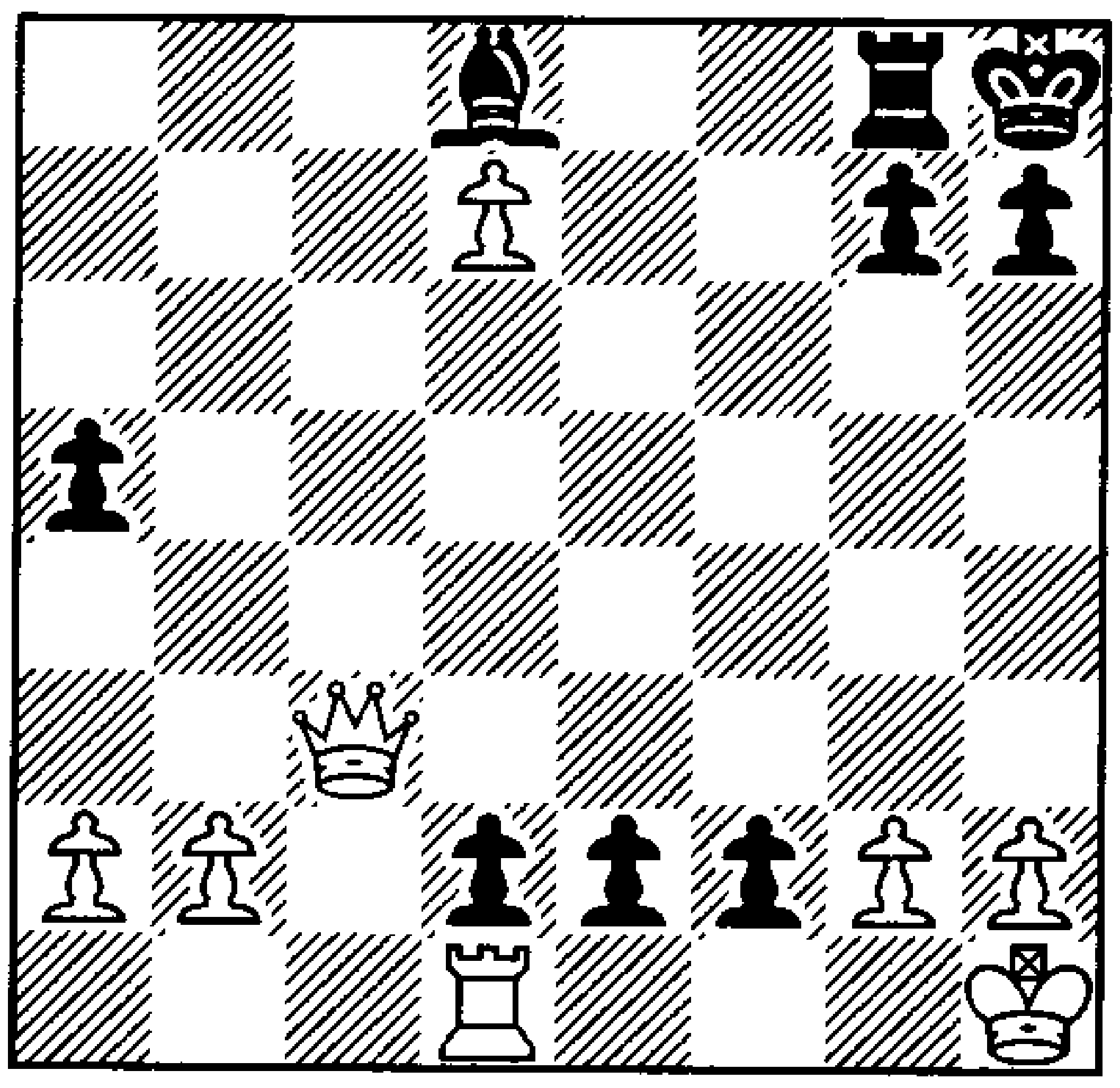
31 ♕c8 ♗d8

The commentators also pointed out another way to win: 31...♖d8!? 32 ♖cc1 d2 33 ♖cd1 ♕e1 *(33...♕f4 34 ♕c4 ♗d6 is also possible*

– *G. K.*) 34 ♕c3 e3 35 ♖dxe1 dxe1♕ 36 ♖xe1 ♗b4!

32 ♕c4 (or 32 ♖cc1 d2 33 ♖cd1 ♕f4! with the threats of 34...♗c7 and 34...e3) **32...♕e1 33 ♖c1 d2 34 ♕c5 ♖g8 35 ♖d1 e3 36 ♕c3 ♕xd1 37 ♖xd1 e2 0-1**

What a phalanx! Philidor would certainly have been delighted by such a fantastic pawn surge.



This inimitable finish is one of the most remarkable positions to have occurred in the 19th century!

'The tactical play of La Bourdonnais, in ensuring the advance of his passed pawns, creates a strong impression,' writes Yakov Neishtadt in his book *Nekoronovannye Chempiony* (The Uncrowned Champions). 'And yet to a much greater degree this game reveals his strategic superiority. The combinations of La Bourdonnais were based on a sounder positional foundation. These were the first steps of the strategy that was to be brilliantly demonstrated in the late 1850s by Paul Morphy.' It is hard not to agree with this: La Bourdonnais did indeed play more deeply than his opponent, seeing strategic trumps which the latter was unaware of, and it was this that decided the matches.

It was enormously regrettable that soon afterwards both of these outstanding players died prematurely. The implacable dispute between England and France was continued by Howard Staunton (1810-1874) and Pierre Charles de Saint-Amant (1800-1872).

Staunton learned to play chess comparatively late in life, and he did not meet either McDonnell or La Bourdonnais in person, but by the early 1840s he was already superior to all his rivals, who gravitated, according to Lasker's classification given above, towards masters 'of the second type'. The scale of his chess activity is impressive! A Shakespearian scholar by profession, he nevertheless founded and edited the magazine *Chess Player's Chronicle* (1841-1854), wrote a chess column in the *Illustrated London News* (1845-1874), studied opening theory (in particular, he devised the gambit 1 d4 f5 2 e4!?), published four remarkable chess books: *Chess Player's Handbook* (1847 plus a further 18 editions over the next 70 years), a collection of the games from his three main matches (1849), a collection of the games from the first international tournament in London (1852) and *Chess Praxis* (1860), which also included games by Morphy. He endorsed the famous 'Staunton pieces', which for a century and a half now have been used throughout the world, organised the first international tournament in history and was the first to try and set up an international chess organisation...

His opponent Saint-Amant was then the best player at the Café de la Régence, that Parisian temple of Caissa, and he enjoyed a considerable reputation not only as a chess player and a successful merchant, but also as an editor (in 1842 he revived *Le Palamède*) and as a representative of France in international chess affairs.

Negotiations about a match proceeded with difficulty, but in November 1843 Staunton finally arrived in Paris and in the hall of the Café de la Régence, with a record crowd of spectators, the clash between the two strongest players of the Old World began. The winner was to be the first to win 11 games. The stir created by this, as the papers wrote, 'great chess battle between France and

England' was indeed great! The French were sure that Saint-Amant would win (six months before this he had defeated his opponent in a short match: +3 -2 =1), but bitter disappointment awaited them.

After eight games the score was +7 =1(!) in Staunton's favour, and after the 15th game the Englishman was only one step from his goal: +10 -3 =2. True, this proved to be not an easy one to make: Saint-Amant displayed his tenacity and won in the 16th, 19th and 20th games... And yet the inevitable was bound to happen.

Game 2

P.Saint-Amant-H.Staunton

Match, Paris 1843, 21st game

Queen's Indian Defence E14

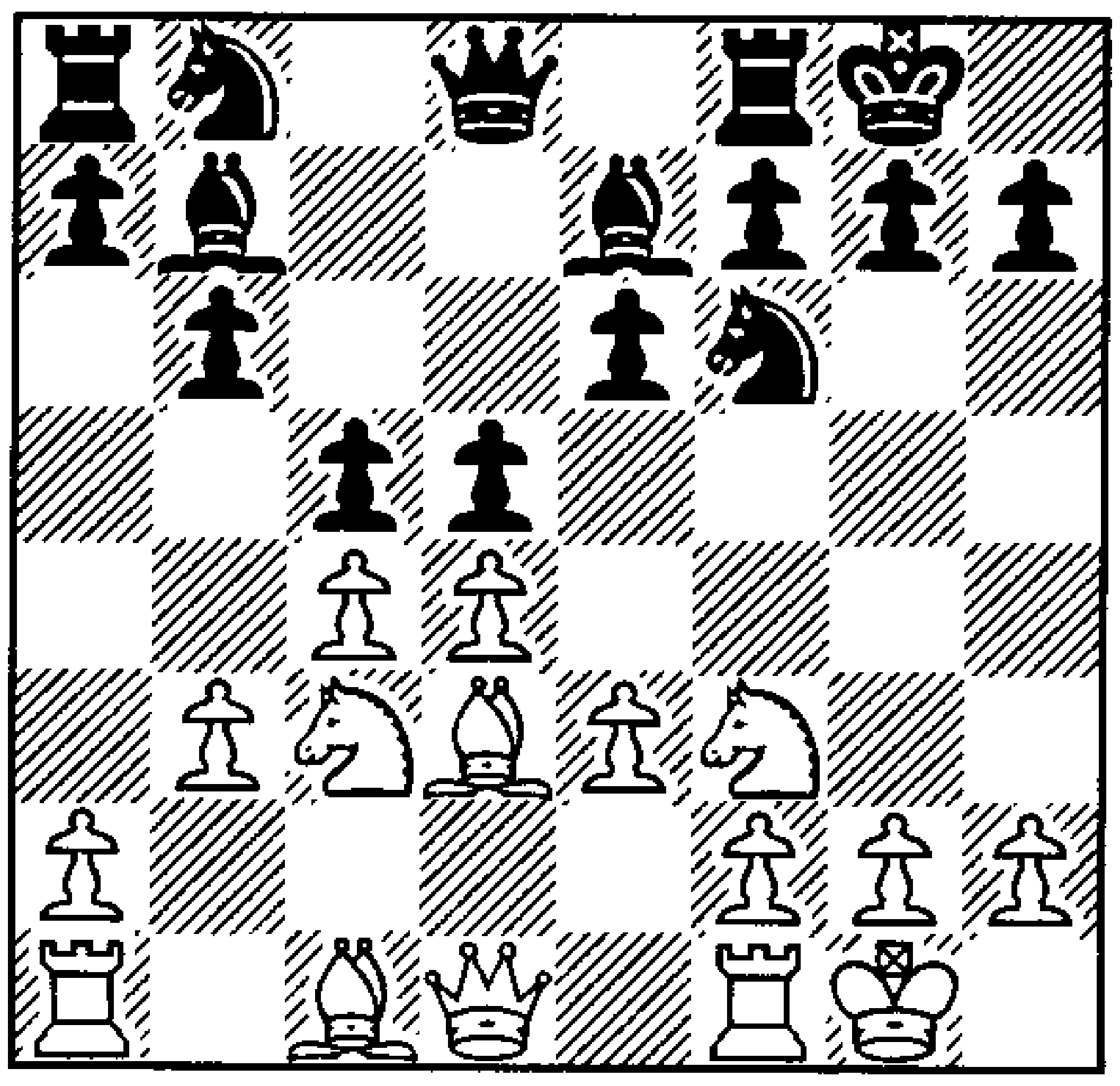
1 d4 d5 2 c4

'The Queen's Gambit... is a very sound and instructive method of opening the game; less brilliant, because less hazardous, than the gambits on the King's side, but especially improving to the student, from the nicety and correctness of play on both sides which it demands.' (Staunton)

2...e6 3 e3 c5 4 ♘c3 ♘f6 5 ♘f3 ♗e7

Strangely enough, a Tarrasch Defence! Moreover, before this, from the seventh to the 17th game, Staunton played it with its main, symmetrical variation – 5...♘c6.

6 ♗d3 b6 (6...dxc4!) **7 0-0 0-0 8 b3 ♗b7**



And now the position on the board is from the 'central variation' of the Queen's Indian Defence.

9 cxd5

A rather premature exchange, provoked by a desire to block the bishop at b7. Nowadays 9 ♗b2 cxd4 10 exd4 ♘c6 11 ♕e2!? or 11 ♖c1 would have been played. However, it is hard to condemn seriously the opening and middlegame of this game: the players were proceeding through virgin territory, intuitively trying to grasp the rudiments of positional play.

9...exd5 10 ♕c2?! (the queen is misplaced here; either 10 ♗b2 or 10 ♕e2 was better) **10...♘c6 11 a3 a6?!**

A superfluous move; if 11...♖c8 12 ♗f5 did not appeal to Black, then the immediate 11...cxd4 really was better.

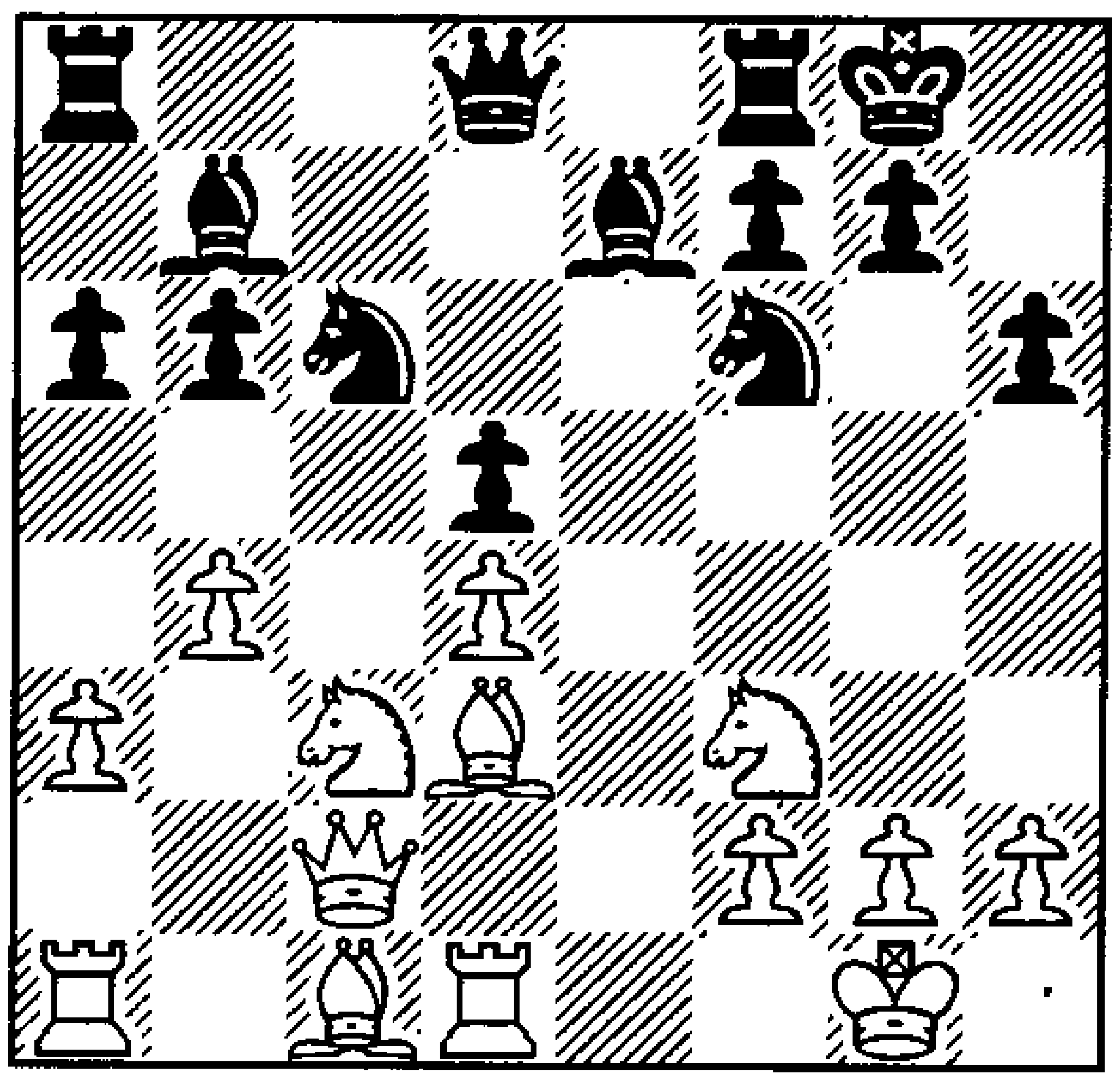
12 ♖d1?!

More logical was 12 dxc5!? bxc5 13 ♘a4, besieging the hanging pawns (13...♖c8 14 ♕e2, correcting his slight error).

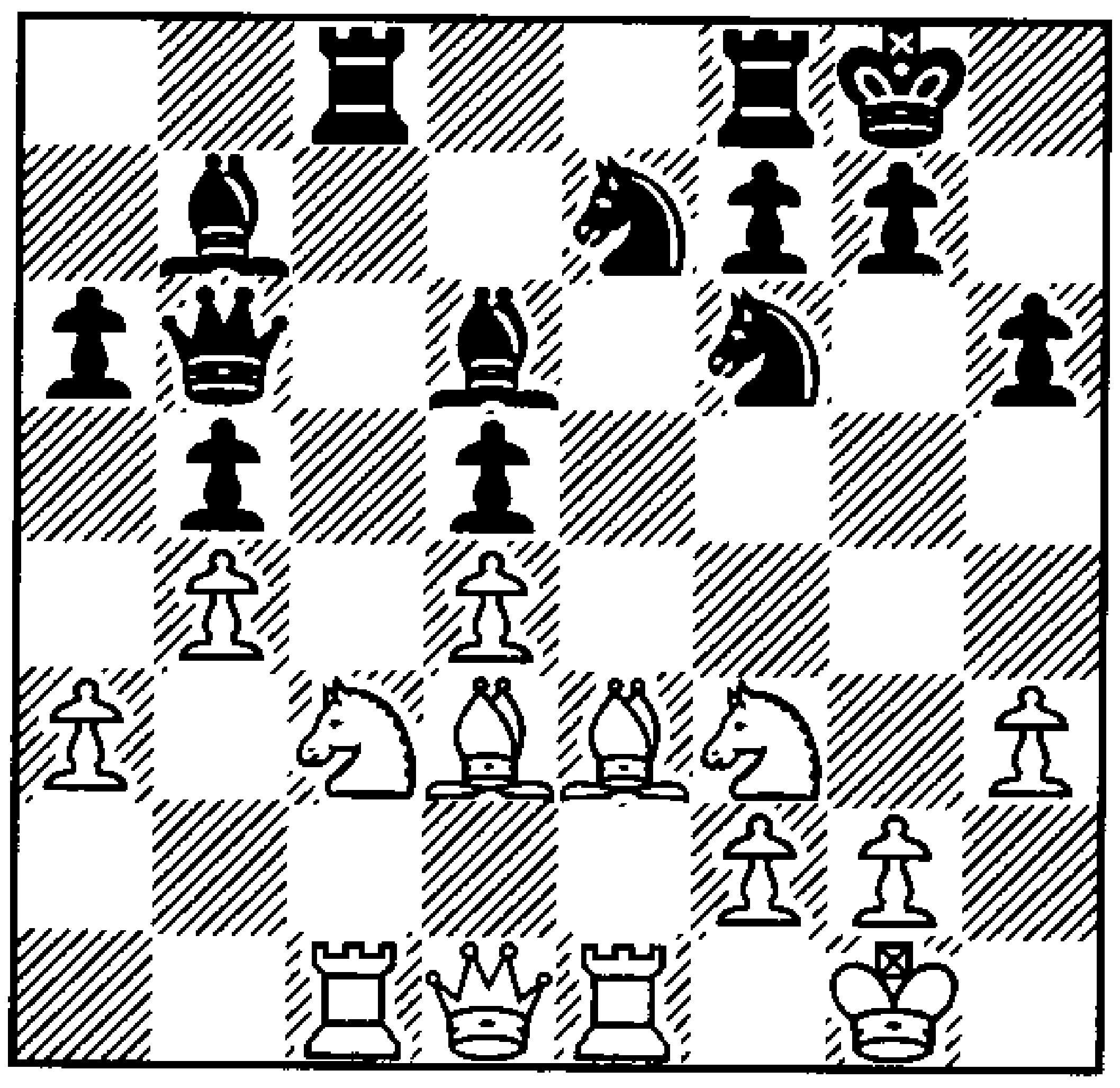
12...cxd4 13 exd4 h6

'Preventing the enemy bishop from going to g5 and freeing the knight from having to defend the h7-pawn.' (Saint-Amant)

14 b4?! (an unnecessary weakening; 14 ♗f4 was more solid)



14...♗d6! 15 ♖e1 b5 (also not essential) **16 h3 ♖c8 17 ♕b3 ♕c7 18 ♗d2 ♕b6 19 ♗e3 ♘e7 20 ♖ac1 ♘h5?!** (a rather strange manoeuvre) **21 ♕d1! ♘f6**

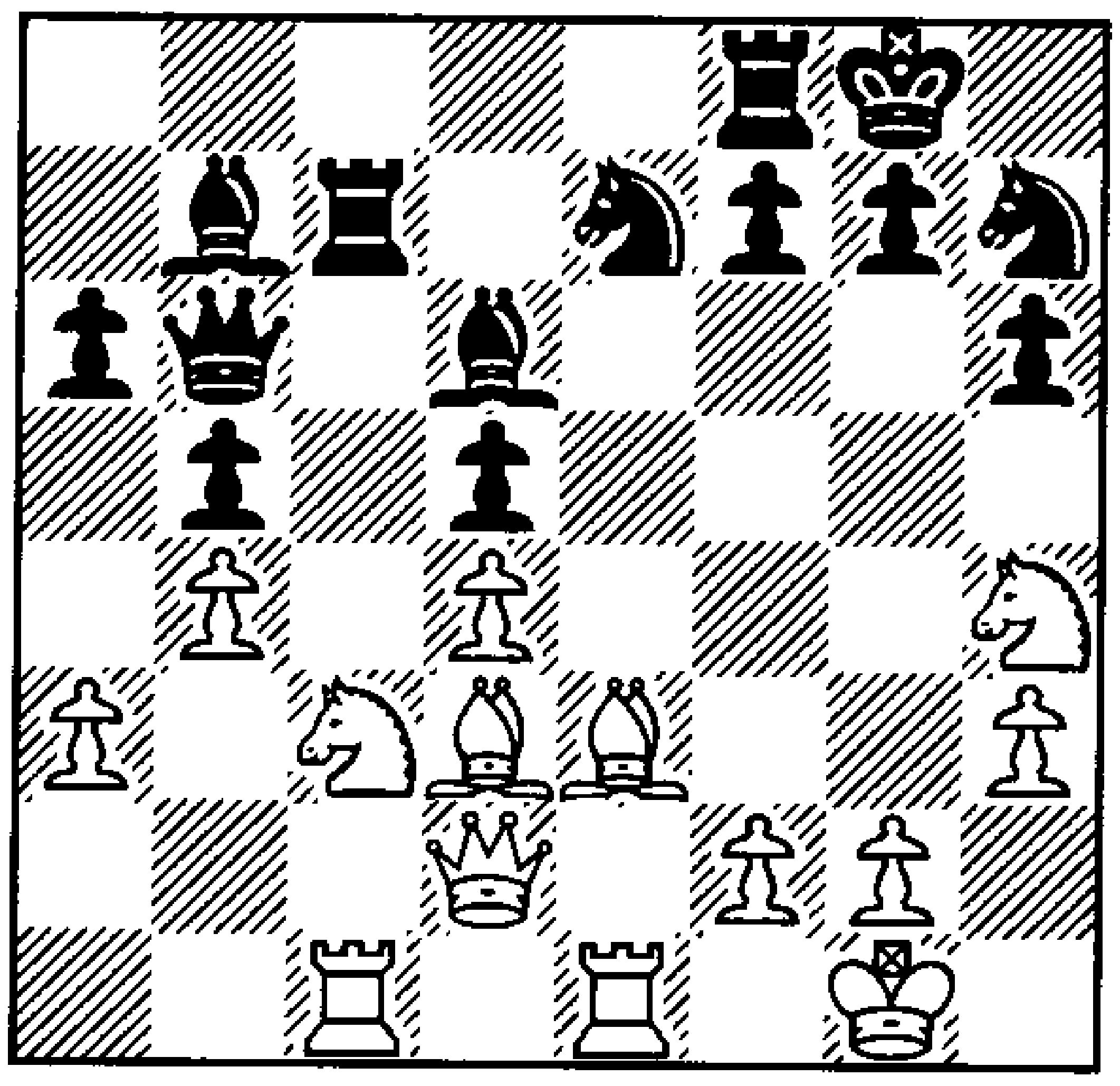


22 ♘h4?!

A no less strange manoeuvre. Nowadays any candidate master would without thinking play 22 ♘e5! (into the centre, closer to the c5-square), with a slight but enduring advantage.

22...♖c7 23 ♕d2 ♘h7

Also a quite unnecessary move, since after the obvious 23...♖fc8! it is bad to play 24 ♗xh6? gxh6 25 ♕xh6 in view of the counter 25...♘e4! (with the threat of ...♗h2+ and ...♕xh6). But 'just in case' Staunton defends against the sacrifice...



24 ♕c2 (not 24 ♗xh6? gxh6 25 ♕xh6?? ♗h2+ and ...♕xh6) **24...♘f6 25 ♔h1?!**

Yet another strange move. As Spassky likes to joke in such cases, 'if it had been possible, he would have gone to h0...'

25...♘e8

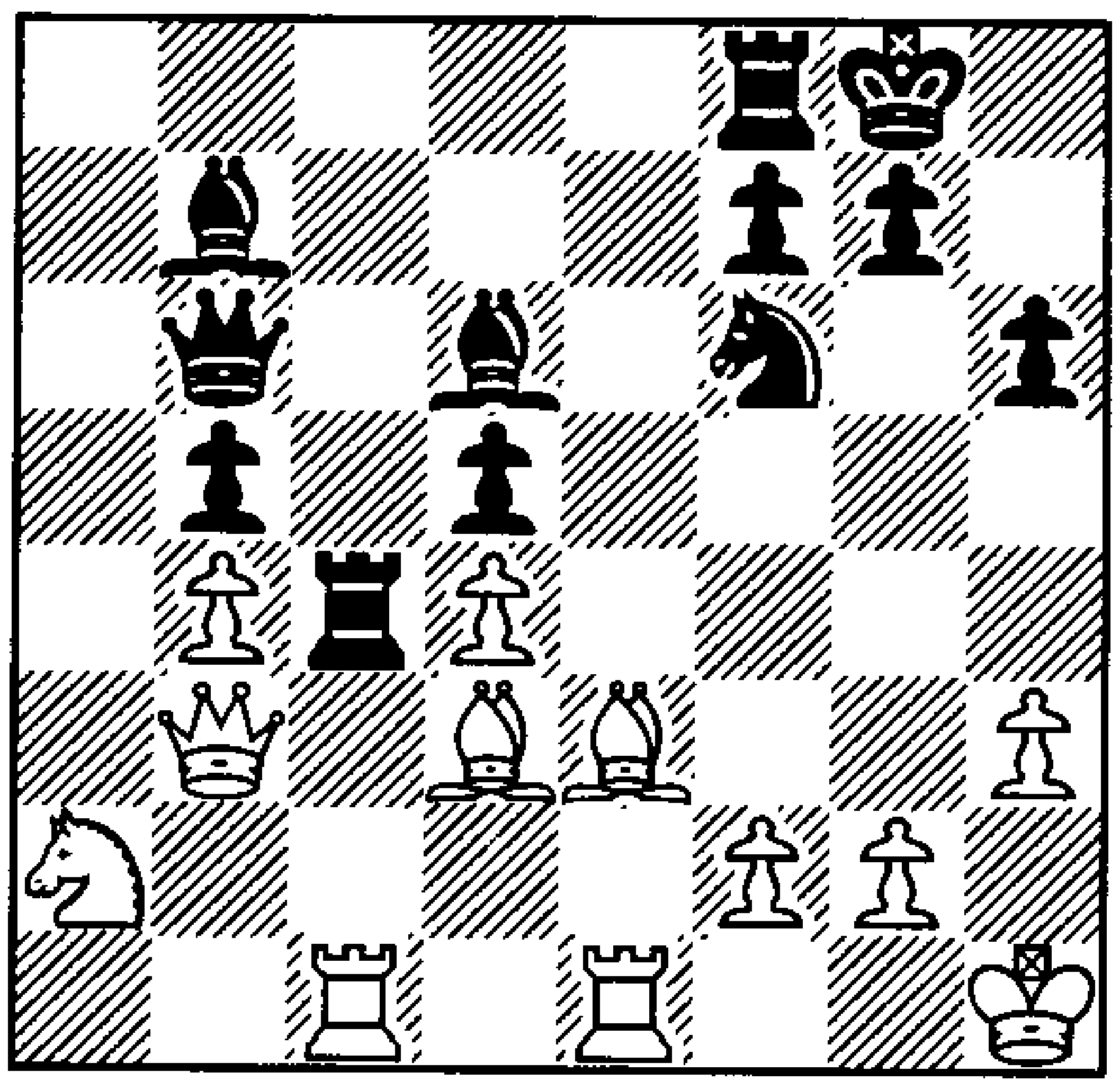
25...♗c8! suggests itself, to control f5 and play the bishop to the normal square e6.

26 ♘f5?! (an obvious positional mistake, exchanging the passive knight at e7) **26...♘xf5 27 ♗xf5 a5! 28 ♕b3 axb4 29 axb4**

Here the game, which had already lasted more than eight hours, was adjourned for one hour. After that Black launched a counter-offensive and seized the initiative:

29...♖c4! 30 ♘a2 ♘f6 31 ♗d3

'In the vain hope of driving away the audacious rook...' (Neishtadt)



31...♕c6! (a prototype of the 'Petrosian' exchange sacrifice!) **32 ♕b2** (32 ♗xc4?? dxc4) **32...♕d7! 33 ♔g1!**

Too dangerous is 33 ♗xc4? dxc4 34 ♔g1 (parrying the threat of ...♕xh3) 34...♘d5 35 ♗d2 ♗c7! 36 ♕c2 ♕d6 37 g3 f5 with a powerful attack.

33...♘h5

Not even thinking about retreating the rook, although, in my view, the preparation of ...f7-f5 is not very much in keeping with the exchange sacrifice.

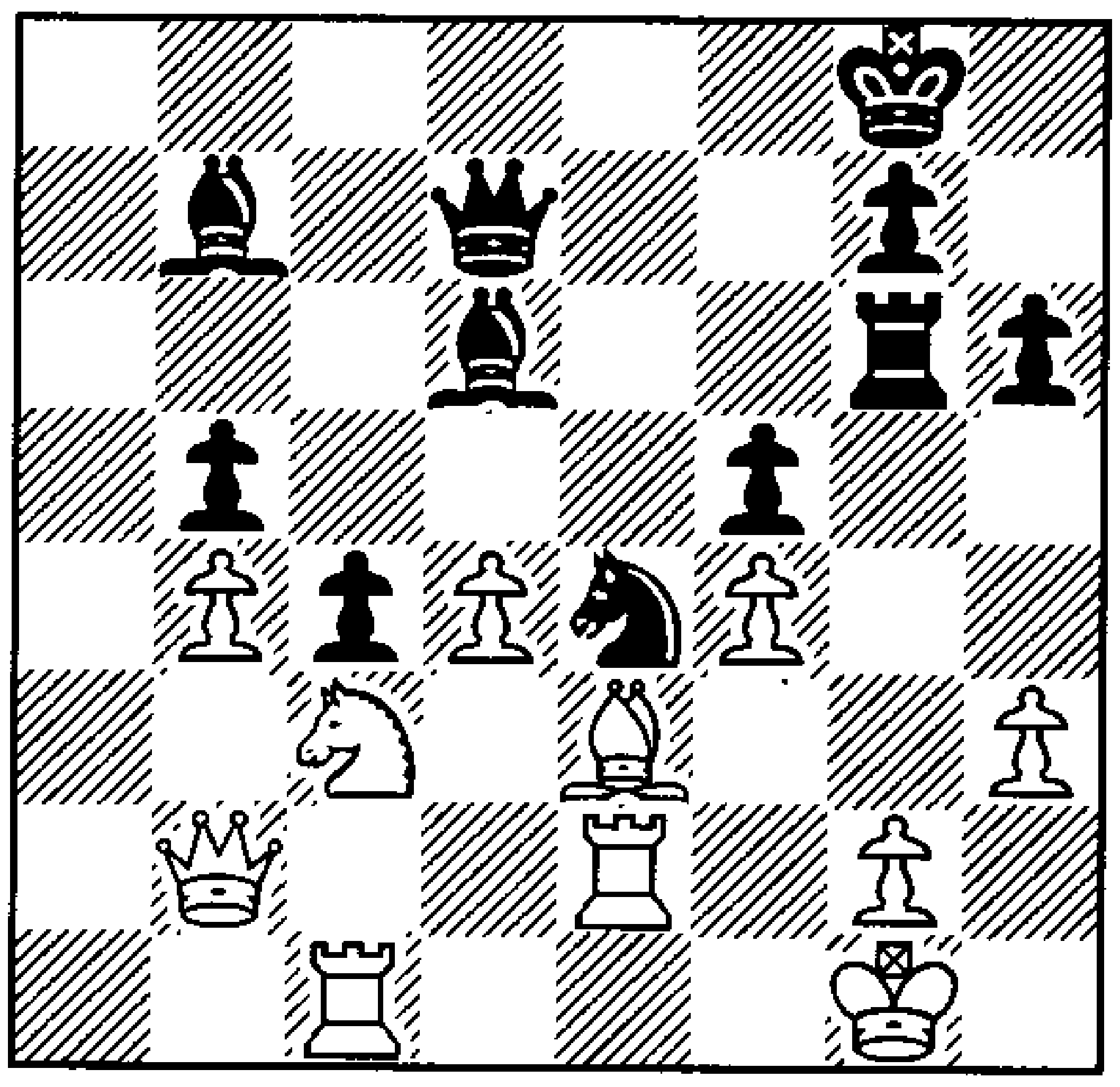
34 ♕d2?!

For some reason the commentators did not mention that here 34 ♗xc4 dxc4 35 ♘c3 followed by d4-d5 was now possible. Of course, Black has full compensation for the exchange, but nothing terrible for White is apparent.

34...f5 35 f4?

A positional blunder, catastrophically weakening the light squares. 35 ♗xc4 dxc4 36 f3, not mentioned by anyone, was better. In the game Spassky-Petrosian (Moscow 7th matchgame 1966) in a similar position White had to play f2-f4, whereas here nothing forced him to do so! However, all these errors are excusable: this happened nearly 160 years ago, and one can merely remark on the gigantic progress in chess mastery.

35...♘g3 36 ♗xc4 (nevertheless...) **36...dxc4!** (activating the bishop at b7) **37 ♕b2 ♖f6 38 ♘c3 ♘e4 39 ♖e2 ♖g6**



With the threat of 40...♘xc3 41 ♕xc3 (41 ♖xc3 ♕e7) 41...♕e7 42 ♖b2 (42 ♖b1 ♗xf4) 42...♕e4 43 ♖cc2 (43 ♕d2 e3!) 43...♖g3 44 ♖e2 ♗xf4.

40 ♖d1?!

Returning the exchange, but, in the words of Staunton 'it is extremely difficult for White to determine what line of play is best here.'

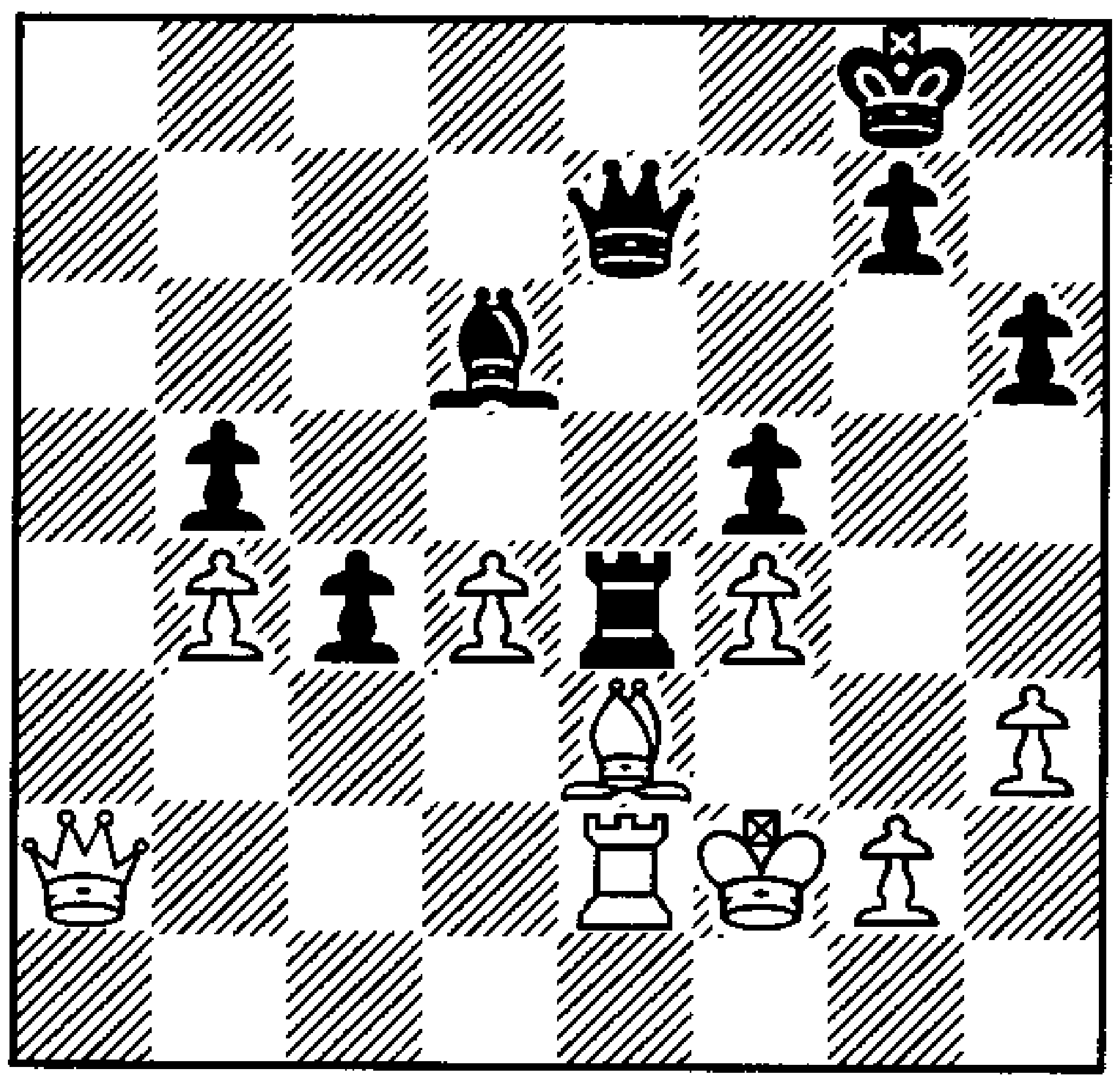
40...♘xc3 41 ♕xc3 ♗f3

The recommendation 41...♕e7?! (intending ...♕e4) is not very successful on account of 42 d5! ♗xb4 43 ♕b2 with unnecessary complications.

42 ♖de1

'The other rook should have been played,' Saint-Amant asserted in *Le Palamède*. But Staunton refuted him in the *Chess Player's Chronicle* by 42...♗xd1 43 ♖xd1 ♕e7 (43...♖g3 is also possible) 44 ♖b1 ♖xg2+ 45 ♔xg2 ♕e4+ or immediately 44...♕e4 45 ♖b2 ♗xb4, and 'in every case Black's game is won.'

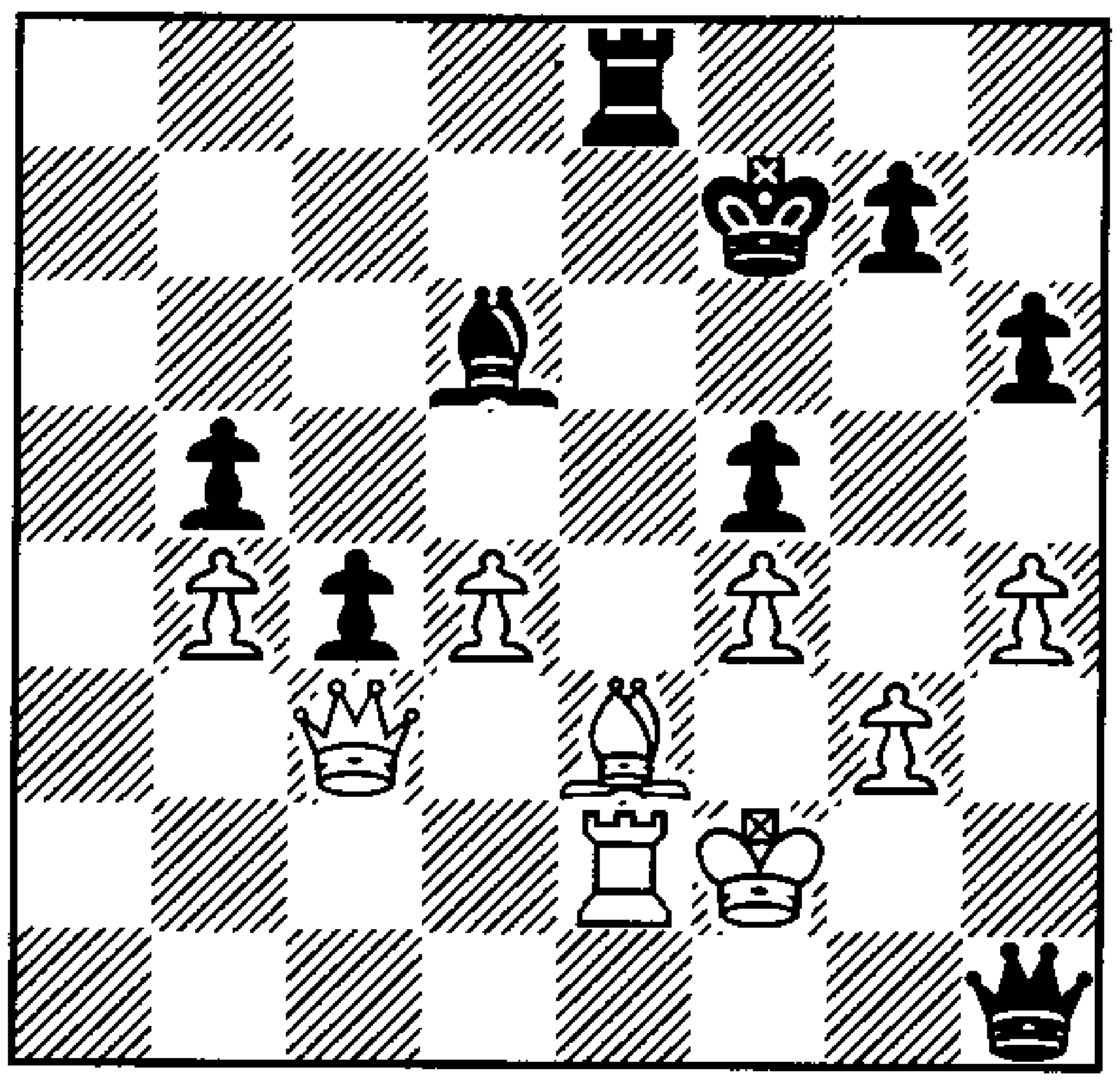
42...♗xe2 43 ♖xe2 ♕e7 44 ♕b2 ♖e6 45 ♔f2 ♖e4 46 ♕a2



46...♔f7?! (missing the simple 46...♗xf4 winning; 46...♔h7 is also good) **47 g3**

White is forced to open a way into his position for the black queen.

47...♕b7 (47...g5!?) **48 ♕a3 ♖e8 49 ♕c3?!** (49 ♖e1 was more tenacious) **49...♕h1 50 h4**



50...g5! 51 ♕e1 ♕h2+ 52 ♔f1 ♕h3+ 53 ♔g1 ♕g4! 54 hxg5

Here it was already turned midnight, and the game was adjourned until the following day. In a hopeless position Saint-Amant fought on to the last bullet.

54...♗xf4 55 ♗xf4 ♕xe2 56 ♕xe2 ♖xe2 57 gxh6 c3 58 ♔f1 ♖e4 59 ♗c1 ♔g6 60 d5 c2 61 ♗d2 ♖xb4 62 d6 ♖d4 63 ♔e2 ♖xd6 64 ♔e3 ♔xh6 65 ♔e2+ ♔g6 66 ♔e1 b4 0-1

The game lasted 14 hours!

Staunton won the 'match of his life' (+11 - 6 =4), gaining a certain revenge for McDonnell's defeat. The winner endured both the pressure of the fanatical Parisian enthusiasts, and the tiring waiting for his opponent's replies (Saint-Amant thought endlessly over every move, and the average length of the games reached nine hours).

Yes, this unhurried match differed strikingly from the fierce encounters between La Bourdonnais and McDonnell! Staunton played cautiously, intuitively trying to grasp the principles of positional play (which, with the exception of a few rules by Philidor, had not yet been recorded and formulated). Every now and then the closed and semi-open games were tried, allowing the quiet development of the pieces. Saint-Amant acted in the same solid, rather dry manner, but not so successfully... An interesting evaluation was given by Lionel Kieseritzky, one of the most original masters of those times: 'Staunton plays strictly correctly for development, understands the position deeply, is composed and quickly orientates himself. But Saint-Amant has not achieved the strength of La Bourdonnais and Deschapelles; both adversaries played one and the same openings... events developed slowly.'

And nevertheless this match became the next, after Philidor, significant step in the development of chess strategy, the understanding of the deep regularities of the game and the art of manoeuvring. 43 years later, at a higher level, this line would be continued by the Steinitz-Zukertort match...

In 1846 Staunton declined a challenge by Kieseritzky, but on the other hand he convincingly won matches to the best of 21 decisive games against the well-known masters Bernhardt Horwitz (+14 -7 =3) and Daniel Harrwitz (+12 -9 =1; in 15 of these games Staunton gave the odds of a pawn), thus reinforcing – with the help also of his newly-invented gambit 1 d4 f5 2 e4!? – his reputation as the number one player in the world.

Despite this, Staunton was not properly recognised by either his contemporaries, or chess historians. But in 1964 Fischer included him in his ten best masters of all time, declaring:

'Staunton was the most profound opening analyst of all time. He was more theorist than player, but nonetheless he was the strongest player of his day. Playing over his games, I discover that they are completely modern; where Morphy and Steinitz rejected the fianchetto, Staunton embraced it. In addition, he understood all of the positional concepts which modern players hold so dear, and thus – with Steinitz – must be considered the first modern player.'

Genius of Combinations

The development of international links in the mid-19th century was immediately reflected in chess too. The indefatigable Staunton, who had long dreamed of organising a tournament of the leading players in the world, decided to make use of a convenient occasion – the Great Industrial Exhibition in London (right from the moment that Prince Albert proposed it in 1849). Having enlisted the support of the St George's Chess Club, he set up an organising committee and sent out invitations over the whole of Europe (at that time America was not yet very conspicuous).

Among those invited were the strongest masters of all the countries: Saint-Amant and Kieseritzky (France), Löwenthal and Szén (Hungary), Petroff, Jaenisch and Schumoff (Russia), and Lasa, Horwitz and Mayet (Germany). And although for various reasons Saint-Amant was unable to participate, nor the Russian players, nor the German 'No.1' Lasa (by a decision of the Berlin Chess Society, he was replaced by the comparatively little-known Anderssen), this hardly minimises the importance of the first international tournament in the history of chess.

Apparently, with the aim of economising, they played not by the usual all-play-all system, but a knockout (which is employed nowadays in the FIDE championships): the 16 players were divided into eight pairs, who met in mini-matches of the first to win two games (draws not counting). The losers were knocked out, and the winners continued the battle in mini-matches of now the first to win four games – the number of games was increased at the demand of the players! In the very first match the random draw brought together two of the potential favourites – Anderssen and Kieseritzky. And although the German maestro won (+2 =1), in a series of friendly games over the following days Kieseritzky came out on top (+9 -5 =2).

However, it was one of these friendly games that eclipsed all of Anderssen’s London victories, and charmed the chess world. Kieseritzky promptly sent the score of it by telegraph to his magazine *La Régence*, Kling and Horwitz published it in the first issue of their new magazine *The Chess Player*, and in the magazine *Wiener Schachzeitung* (1855) Falkbeer published a detailed analysis of this game and christened it ‘immortal’.

Game 3

A.Anderssen-L.Kieseritzky

Friendly game, London 1851

King’s Gambit C33

1 e4 e5 2 f4

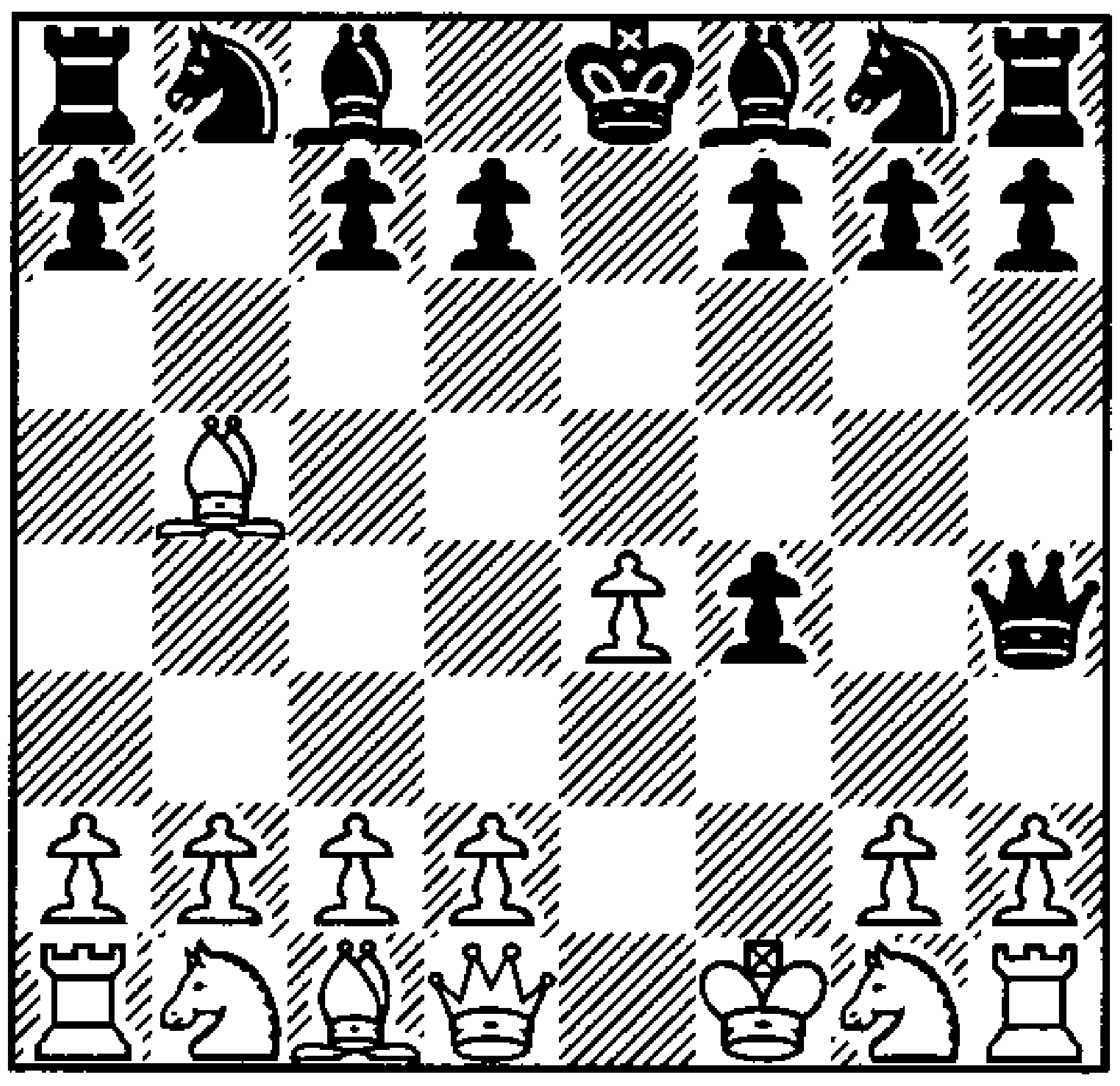
The King’s Gambit was the most popular opening of that era: the initiative at any price! The sacrifice of material at an early stage was regarded as a sign of good taste, and to refuse it was considered bad form.

2...exf4 3 ♗c4 ♕h4+ 4 ♔f1 b5?

Kieseritzky’s favourite move, diverting the bishop away from the f7-square, but this counter-gambit is bad!

5 ♗xb5

When I was forced to play Black in this position, in a thematic exhibition game with Short (London 1993), I thought for some 10-15 minutes and wanted to resign immediately. I simply did not understand: for what has the pawn been given up?



5...♘f6 6 ♘f3 ♕h6

6...♕h5 7 ♘c3 ♗b7 8 ♗c4 or 8 e5 favours White.

7 d3

More energetic is 7 ♘c3!, as Short in fact played against me. After 7...g5 (7...♗b7 8 ♕e2 or 8 d4!? ♘xe4 9 ♕e2) 8 d4 ♗b7 (the antediluvian game Rafael-Morphy, New York 1857, went 8...♗g7 9 e5 – 9 h4!? – 9...♘h5, and here 10 ♘e4! g4 11 ♘h4 would have been strong) 9 h4 ♖g8 10 ♔g1 gxh4 11 ♖xh4 ♕g6 12 ♕e2 ♘xe4 13 ♖xf4 f5 14 ♘h4 ♕g3 15 ♘xe4 Black finally resigned.

7...♘h5?!

Better was 7...♗c5 8 d4 ♗b6 9 ♘c3 ♗b7 10 ♗d3 (Anderssen-Pollmächer, Leipzig 1852; 10 e5 ♘g4!?) 10...g5! 11 h4 ♖g8. ‘Kieseritzky bases his play on tactical threats, which Anderssen skilfully parries.’ (Neishtadt)

8 ♘h4?!

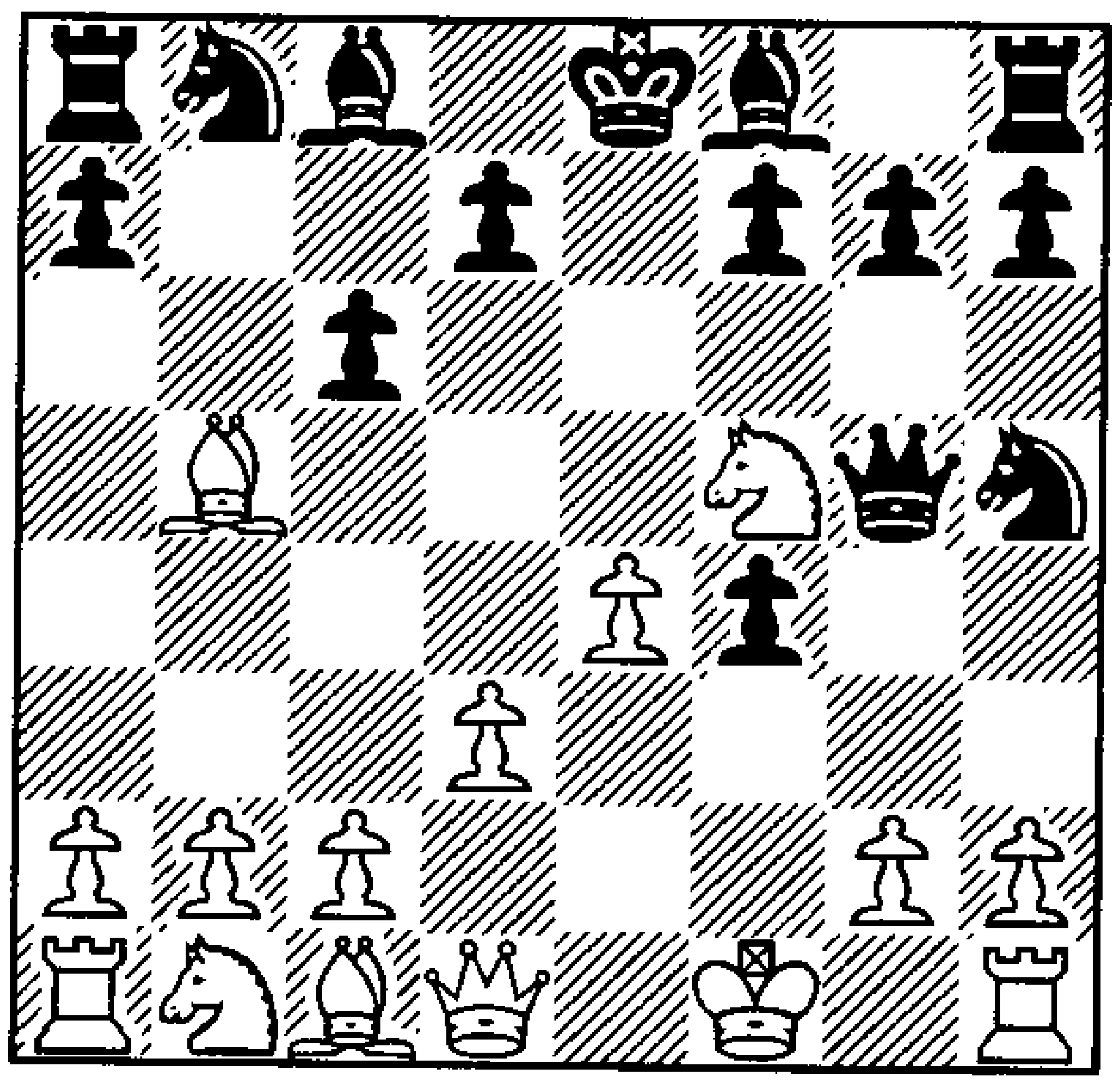
Defending against ...♘g3+, but much more ‘clever’ was 8 ♖g1! with the threat of 9 g4, and if 8...♕b6, then 9 ♘c3 c6 10 ♗c4 with an overwhelming advantage.

8...♕g5

Kieseritzky recommended 8...g6, but after 9 g3! ♗e7 10 ♕g4 c6 (or 10...♔d8 11 ♘g2 d6 12 ♕f3) 11 ♗c4 Black is a long way from equalising.

9 ♘f5 c6?!

But here 9...g6 should have been played, not fearing 10 h4 in view of 10...♕f6 11 ♘c3 c6 12 ♗a4 (12 ♗c4? d5) 12...♘a6! 13 d4 ♘g3+ 14 ♘xg3 fxg3+ 15 ♕f3 ♕xd4 16 ♗b3 f6 with an unclear game, but not 10...♘g3+? 11 ♘xg3 ♕xb5 (11...♕xg3? 12 ♖h3) 12 ♘c3 ♕e5 13 ♘ge2 ♗h6 14 g3 f3 15 ♘f4 with a won game.



10 g4?

Another mistake. Of course, the simple 10 ♗a4 was better, with an obvious advantage after both 10...d5 11 g4! dxe4 12 dxe4 ♗a6+ 13 ♔g2 ♘f6 14 ♕f3 and 10...g6 11 ♘g3 ♘xg3+ 12 hxg3 ♕xg3 13 ♘c3 ♗c5 14 ♕e1! ♕xe1+ (14...♕g4? 15 ♖h4) 15 ♔xe1 g5 16 ♖h5 ♗e7 17 g3! (Hübner).

10...♘f6

Also to be considered was 10...g6!? 11 ♘d4 (11 gxh5 gxf5 12 h4 ♕f6 13 ♗c4 fxe4 14 dxe4 ♖g8 is worse for White) 11...♗g7 12 c3 ♗xd4 13 cxd4 cxb5 (13...♕xb5 14 ♘c3 ♕b6 15 gxh5 ♕xd4 16 ♗xf4 ♕f6?! 17 ♕g4 is less clear) 14 gxh5 ♘c6 15 ♘c3 d6 16 ♕f3 ♘xd4 17 h4! ♕e5 18 ♕xf4 ♗e6, and it is now White who has to fight for equality

11 ♖g1!

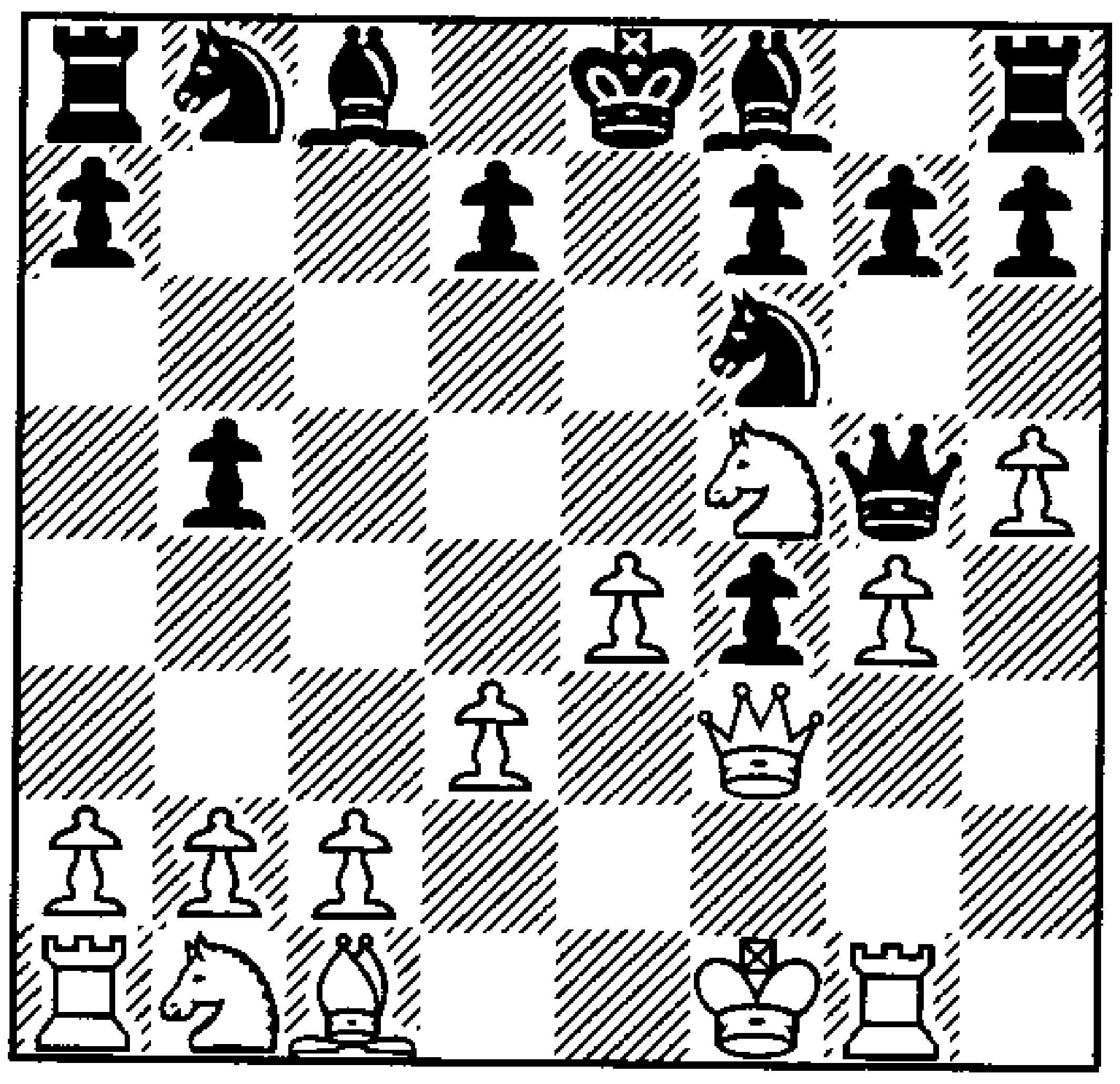
A pretty and intuitive bishop sacrifice.

11...cxb5?

After this Black has an objectively bad position. Unclear is 11...d5 12 h4 ♕g6 13 h5 (less good is 13 ♗xf4?! h5! 14 gxh5 ♕xh5 15 ♕xh5 ♖xh5 16 ♗xb8 cxb5) 13...♕g5 14 ♕f3 ♗xf5 15 exf5 cxb5 16 ♗xf4 ♕h4 17 ♘c3 ♘c6! 18 g5 ♕xh5 19 ♕e3+ ♔d7 20 gxf6 ♖e8 21 ♕f2 gxf6 22 ♕g2 ♕xf5 23 ♕xd5+ ♕xd5 24 ♘xd5, but the strongest is evidently 11...h5!? 12 h4 ♕g6 13 g5 ♘g4. Now 14 ♘c3 (14 ♗xf4 d5!) 14...cxb5 15 ♘d5 ♘a6 (15...d6!? 16 ♘d4 ♘a6 17 ♘xf4 ♕h7) 16 ♗xf4 ♗b7 17 c4 ♗xd5 18 cxd5 ♕b6 is advantageous to Black, and so there only remains 14 ♗a4 d5 15 ♕e1! dxe4 16 ♕xe4+ ♔d8 17 ♘d4 with a sharp game.

12 h4! (but not 12 ♕f3 h5! etc.) **12...♕g6 13 h5 ♕g5 14 ♕f3**

Threatening the simple ♗xf4.



14...♘g8

As Euwe states, 'Black is too concerned about retaining his material advantage.' However, 14...♘xg4 15 ♖xg4 ♕xh5 16 ♗xf4 would also have left him little hope of saving the game: 16...g6 17 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 18 ♗xd6 ♘c6 19 ♕f6 ♖g8 20 ♘c3 or 16...d5 17 ♘c3 ♗xf5 (17...g6? 18 ♘xd5) 18 exf5 etc.

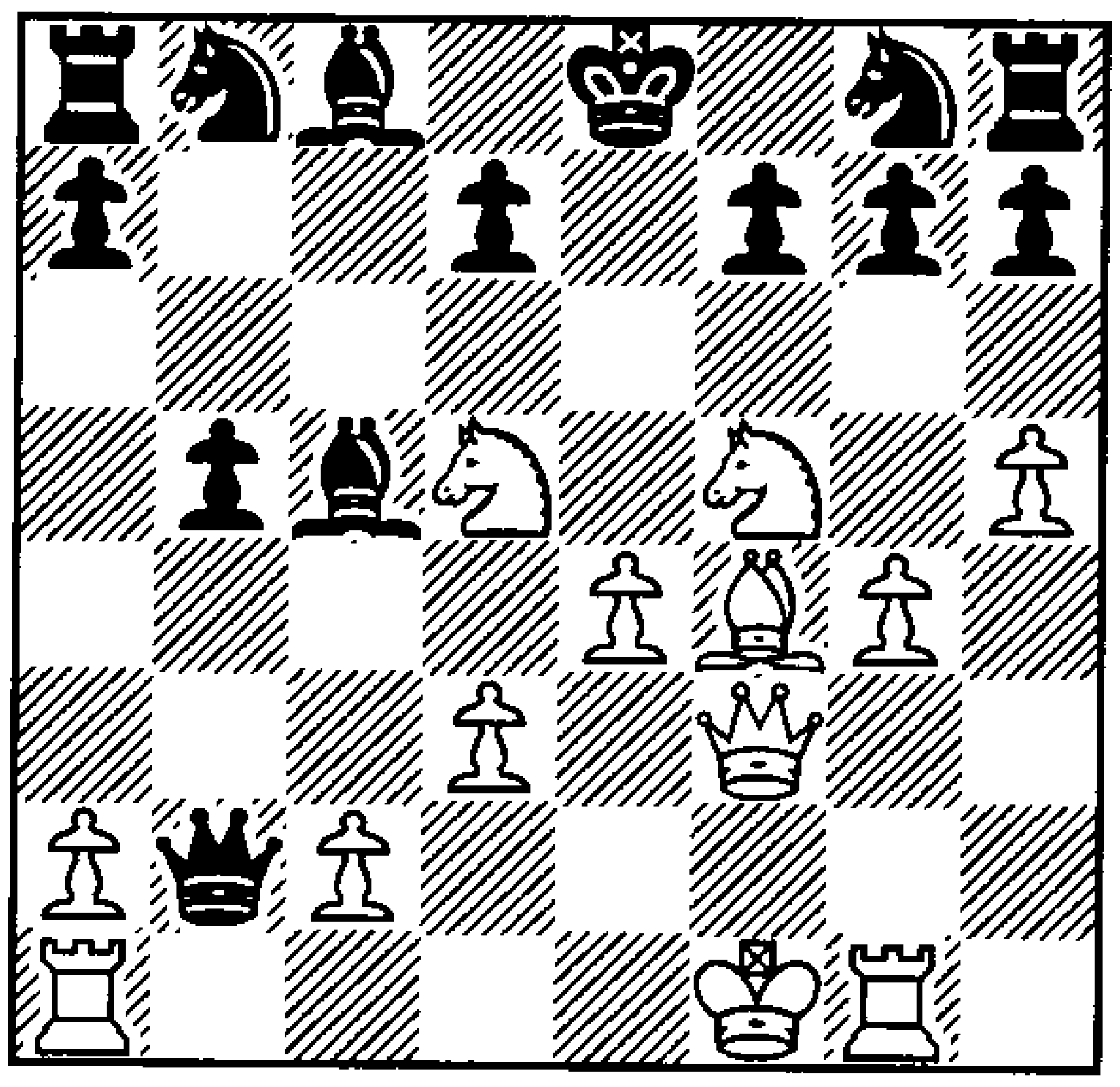
15 ♗xf4 ♕f6

The alternative 15...♕d8 16 ♘c3 was equally bad.

16 ♘c3 ♗c5?

An immediately losing move. If 16...♗b7 there is a choice between 17 ♘xb5 ♕xb2 18 ♘c7+ ♔d8 19 ♔g2 and 17 ♕g3 ♘a6 (17...♘c6 18 g5 and ♘xb5) 18 ♘xb5 ♕xb2 19 ♘fd6+ ♗xd6 20 ♘xd6+ ♔f8 21 ♗e5 ♕b6 22 ♔g2 f6 23 g5! Things are also not easy for Black after 16...♘a6 17 g5 ♕c6 18 ♗e5 or 17 ♘xb5 ♕xb2 18 ♘bd6+ ♗xd6 19 ♘xd6+ ♔e7 20 ♖e1 ♕xa2 21 e5.

17 ♘d5 (17 d4! and only then ♘d5 was much simpler) **17...♕xb2**



18 ♗d6?!

‘The start of a brilliant combination, the correctness of which, however, is dubious’ (Euwe). With this move White throws away an easy win (and perhaps the win altogether!):

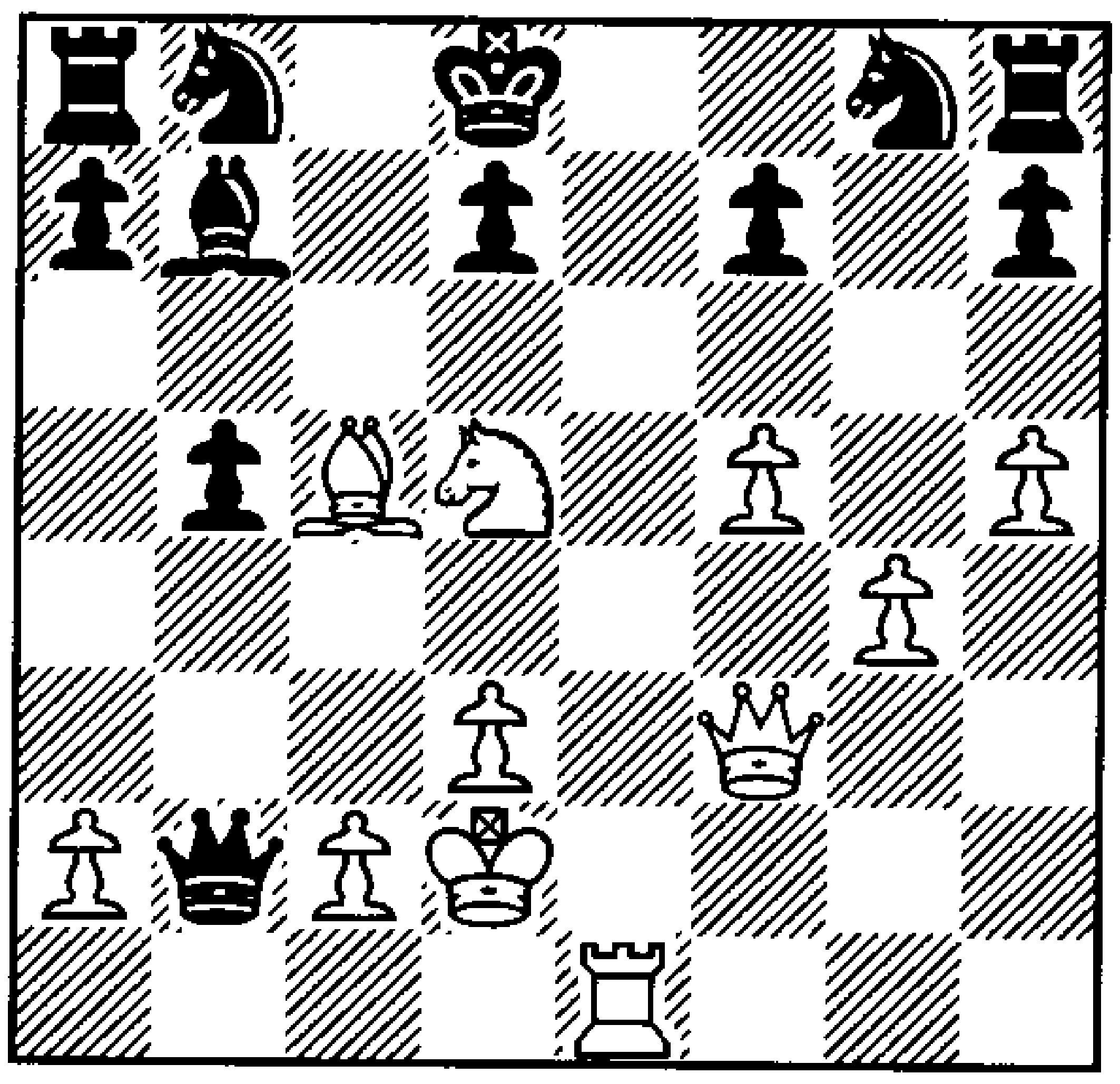
18 d4 (18 ♗e3!? and 18 ♖e1!? have also been suggested) 18...♕xa1+ (18...♗f8 19 ♘c7+ ♔d8 20 ♖e1 and wins) 19 ♔g2 ♕b2 20 dxc5 ♘a6 21 ♘d6+ ♔f8 22 ♗e5 ♕xc2+ 23 ♔h3 f6 24 ♘xf6 wins for White.

18...♗xg1?

As was shown by Steinitz, 18...♕xa1+ 19 ♔e2 ♕b2! was essential. After 20 ♔d2! (less good is 20 ♖c1 ♗b7 21 ♗xc5 ♗xd5 22 ♕e3 ♗e6 23 ♗d4 ♕a3 24 ♘xg7+ ♔d8 25 ♘xe6+ dxe6 26 ♗xh8 ♘d7) 20...♗xg1! 21 e5 ♗a6 White’s attack, in my view, is sufficient only for a draw: 22 ♘xg7+ ♔d8 23 ♕xf7 ♔c8 24 ♕e8+ ♔b7 25 ♕d8 ♔c6 26 ♘b4+ ♕xb4+ 27 ♗xb4 ♗b7 28 ♕f8 ♔b6 29 ♕d8+ ♔c6 or 22 ♘c7+ ♔d8 23 ♕xa8 (23 ♘xa6 ♗b6 24 ♕xa8 ♗a5+ 25 ♔e3 ♕c1+ 26 ♔f2 ♕xc2+ 27 ♔f1 ♕c1+ 28 ♔f2 ♗b6+ 29 d4 also leads to a draw) 23...♗b6 24 ♕xb8+ ♗c8 25 ♘d5 ♗a5+ 26 ♔e3 ♕xc2 (26...♕c1+ is also possible) 27 ♕xa7 ♕c1+ 28 ♔f2 ♕d2+ 29 ♔g3 ♕e1+ 30 ♔g2.

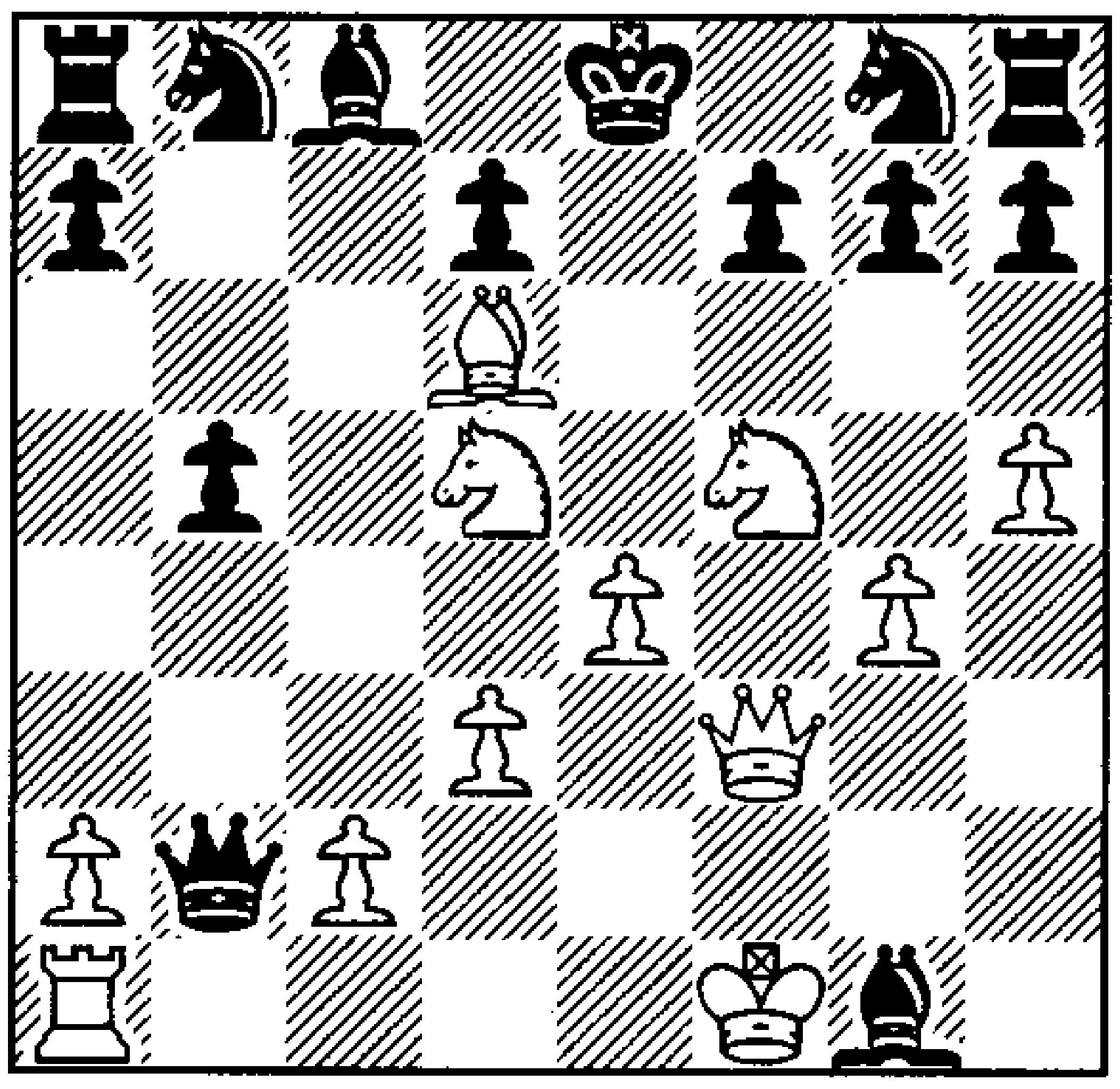
But apart from 21...♗a6 there is also an interesting try for an advantage – 21...♗b7!? For example: 22 ♘xg7+ (22 ♘c7+?! ♔d8 23 ♕xb7 ♗b6 24 ♘xa8 ♗a5+ 25 ♔e3 ♕c1+ 26 ♔f2 ♕xc2+ 27 ♔g1 ♕c1+ 28 ♔h2 ♕c8 wins for Black) 22...♔d8 23 ♕xf7 ♗e3+! 24 ♘xe3 ♘e7 25 ♕xe7+ ♔c8 26 ♕f6 (26 e6!? ♗c6 27 ♕f7 ♘a6 28 e7 ♔b7 29 e8♕ ♖axe8 30 ♘xe8 is also unclear) 26...♕xa2 27 ♘gf5 ♕a5+! 28 ♔e2 ♖e8 29 ♗e7 ♘a6 30 ♘d6+ ♔c7 31 ♘xb7! ♔xb7 32 ♕f3+ ♔b8 33 ♗d6+ ♘c7 34 ♘d5, and White’s counterplay is nevertheless sufficient for a draw: 34...♖c8 35 ♘f6 ♖d8 36 ♘d5 ♖c8 with a repetition.

I should add that 20...g6? (instead of 20...♗xg1!) will not do, but not because of the generally-accepted variation 21 ♖b1? gxf5! 22 ♖xb2 ♗xd6 23 e5 ♗xe5 24 ♕e3 ‘with advantage to White’ (after 24...♘c6! 25 d4 ♘ge7 he has to beat a retreat), but in view of the very pretty 21 ♖e1! ♗b7 22 ♗xc5 gxf5 (after 22...♗xd5 23 exd5+ ♔d8 both 24 ♘d6 ♘h6 25 ♕e3 ♘a6 26 a3! and 24 ♗d4 ♕b4+ 25 ♗c3 ♕c5 26 ♗a5+ ♔c8 27 d4 are good for White) 23 exf5+ ♔d8.



Analysis diagram

24 ♗b6+!! axb6 25 ♕e3! A wonderful ‘quiet’ move! Black does not have a single check, and if 25...♗xd5 there follows 26 ♕xb6+ and ♖e8 mate. For a human it is very hard to perceive such a mate: to see the move ♗b6+!! from afar is impossible. Whereas a computer finds such sacrifices almost instantly... Incidentally, a similar bishop sacrifice appears in one of the variations from the game Tal-Portisch (Bled 2nd matchgame 1965), which is analysed in the second volume. However, let us return to the 19th century.

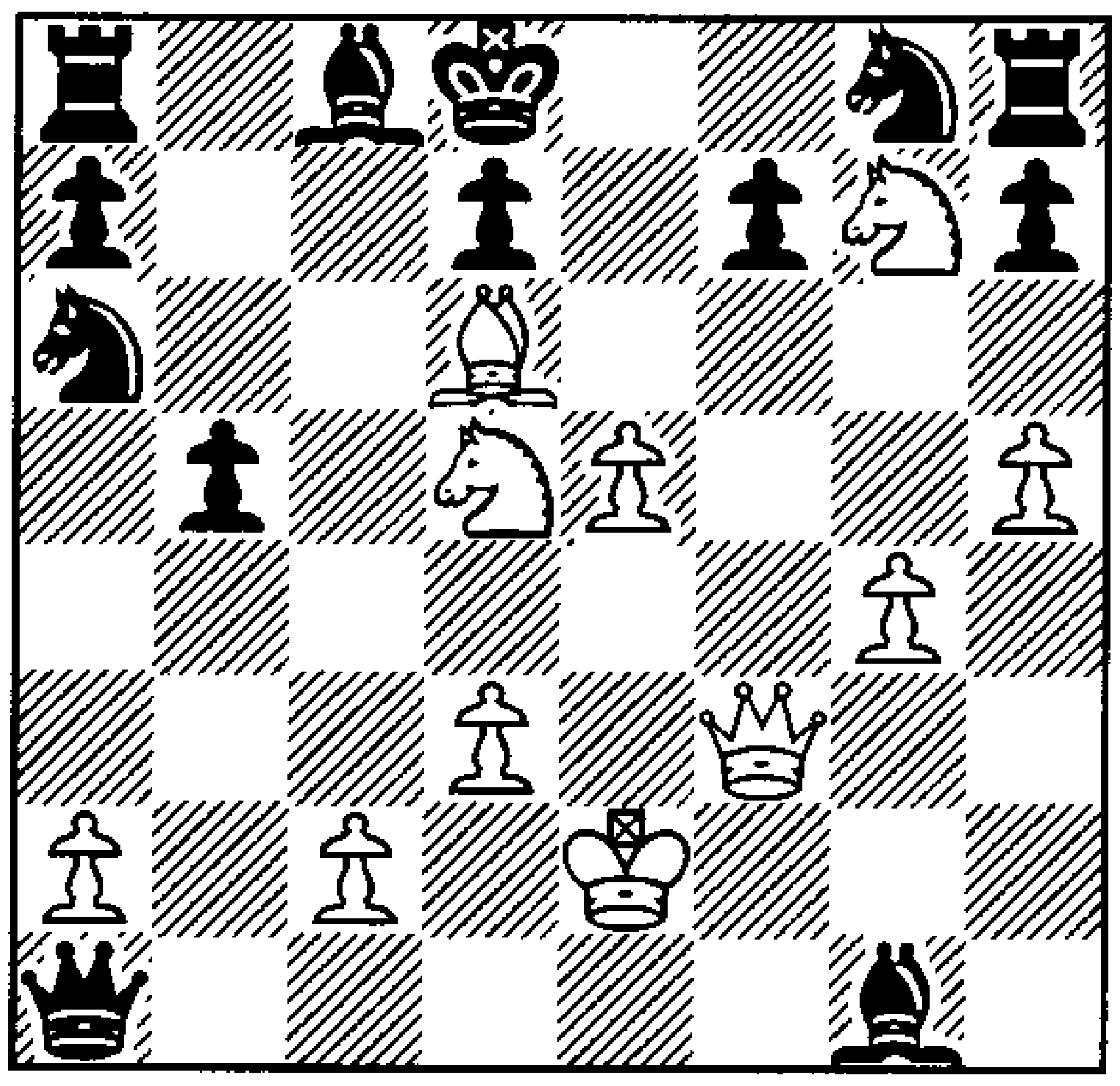


19 e5!

Also a 'quiet' move, with the elementary threat of 20 ♘xg7+ ♔d8 21 ♗c7 mate.

19...♕xa1+ 20 ♔e2

Here Black resigned. Black loses after 20...♗b7 21 ♘xg7+ ♔d8 22 ♕xf7 ♘h6 23 ♘e6+ or 20...f6 21 ♘xg7+ ♔f7 22 ♘xf6 etc. Steinitz looked for a way to save the game with 20...♗a6 21 ♘c7+ ♔d8 22 ♘xa6! (Falkbeer), but analysis by Chigorin proved clear cut: 22...♕c3 23 ♗c7+ ♕xc7 24 ♘xc7 ♔xc7 25 ♕xa8 ♘c6 (25...♗c5 26 ♘d6 ♗xd6 27 exd6+ ♔c8 28 ♕xa7) 26 ♘d6 ♘xe5 27 ♘xb5+ ♔b6 28 ♕b8+ ♔c6 29 c4; 22...♗b6 23 ♕xa8 ♕c3 24 ♕xb8+ ♕c8 25 ♕xc8+ ♔xc8 26 ♗f8 h6 27 ♘d6+ ♔d8 28 ♘xf7+ ♔e8 29 ♘xh8 ♔xf8 30 ♔f3; 22...♕xa2 23 ♗c7+ ♔e8 24 ♘b4 ♘c6 25 ♘xa2 ♗c5 26 ♗d6. However, the game is rightly famous for 20...♘a6 21 ♘g7+ ♔d8



Analysis diagram

22 ♕f6+!! (a spectacular concluding sacrifice) 22...♘xf6 23 ♗e7 mate!

Objectively the game is rather weak and superficial, but what a finish! After sacrificing both rooks, a bishop and a queen, the mate was simultaneously pure, economic and smooth! 'An unusually elegant finish, almost forcing the incorrectness of the entire combination to be forgotten.' (Euwe) Later the combination with the sacrifice of both rooks on their initial squares was to occur many times, including games by Steinitz, Alekhine and Tal...

Let us return, however, to the London knockout tournament. In the quarter-final Anderssen overcame Szén (+4 -2), after losing the first two games to him – if the initial rules had been retained (the first to win two games), chess history would have turned out differently... Then the random draw played a cruel trick: in the semi-final Anderssen met the chief favourite Staunton and, to the horror of the English fans, inflicted on him an unconditional defeat (+4 -1). With this the tournament intrigue was exhausted: in the final Anderssen tore to pieces the local 'tourist' Wyvill (+4 -2 =1) and won the first prize.

Staunton was in a state of shock: his reputation as the best player in the world had suffered a severe blow. However, as the organiser of the tournament he had sensed the trickiness of the knockout system, and even before the start he had found a way of insuring himself: in the rules it was written that the winner was obliged to accept a challenge from any participant. A kind of right to a return match! And Staunton promptly challenged the offender to a match (it was suggested that they should play to the best of 21 decisive games). But... he fell ill, Anderssen's holiday came to an end, and he had to return home. Alas, this battle of titans never in fact took place...

The new uncrowned king of chess Adolf Anderssen (6 July 1818 – 13 March 1879) was born into a poor family in Breslau (now

Wroclaw), where he graduated from the university and lived almost continuously all his life, teaching mathematics and German in a secondary school. He made the acquaintance of chess at the age of nine and learned from the books of Philidor, Moses Hirschel (a populariser of the works by Greco and Stamma) and the Viennese player Johann Allgaier, the author of the best chess manual in the German language, permeated with the spirit of the Italian School. He was attracted by composition and he published a collection *Aufgaben für Schachspieler* (1842 and 1852).

Back in the mid-1840s he had played at an amateur level, being inferior to Lasa, Bledow, Mayet and Löwenthal... But he made staggering progress by studying the works of the Modenese School, Lewis and Walker, and by analysing the games of the old masters, especially the La Bourdonnais-McDonnell encounters. On flying visits to Berlin he met strong opponents there, impressed with his magical combinations, and soon was deemed a rising star.

After London 1851 his compatriots arranged for Anderssen a genuine coronation! But he still had to demonstrate that his London triumph was not a fluke. There were then extremely few tournaments, and he had to demonstrate this more with creative, rather than competitive achievements.

The following game literally bewitched his contemporaries, who called it, following the example of Steinitz, 'an evergreen in the laurel wreath of great German masters.' Chigorin too, as well as many others, considered it to be one of the most brilliant games ever played.

Game 4

A.Anderssen-J.Dufresne

Berlin 1852

Evans Gambit C52

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 b4!? (also the height of fashion at that time) **4...♗xb4**

As Capablanca said, the way to refute a gambit is to accept it! After 4...♗b6 5 a4 White simply has more space: 5...a5 (5...a6 is sounder) 6 b5 ♘d4 7 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 8 c3 ♗b6 9 d4 exd4 10 0-0! (10 cxd4 d5!) 10...♘e7 11 ♗g5 h6 12 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 13 cxd4, and Black was unable to equalise in Kasparov-Piket, Amsterdam 1995.

5 c3 ♗a5

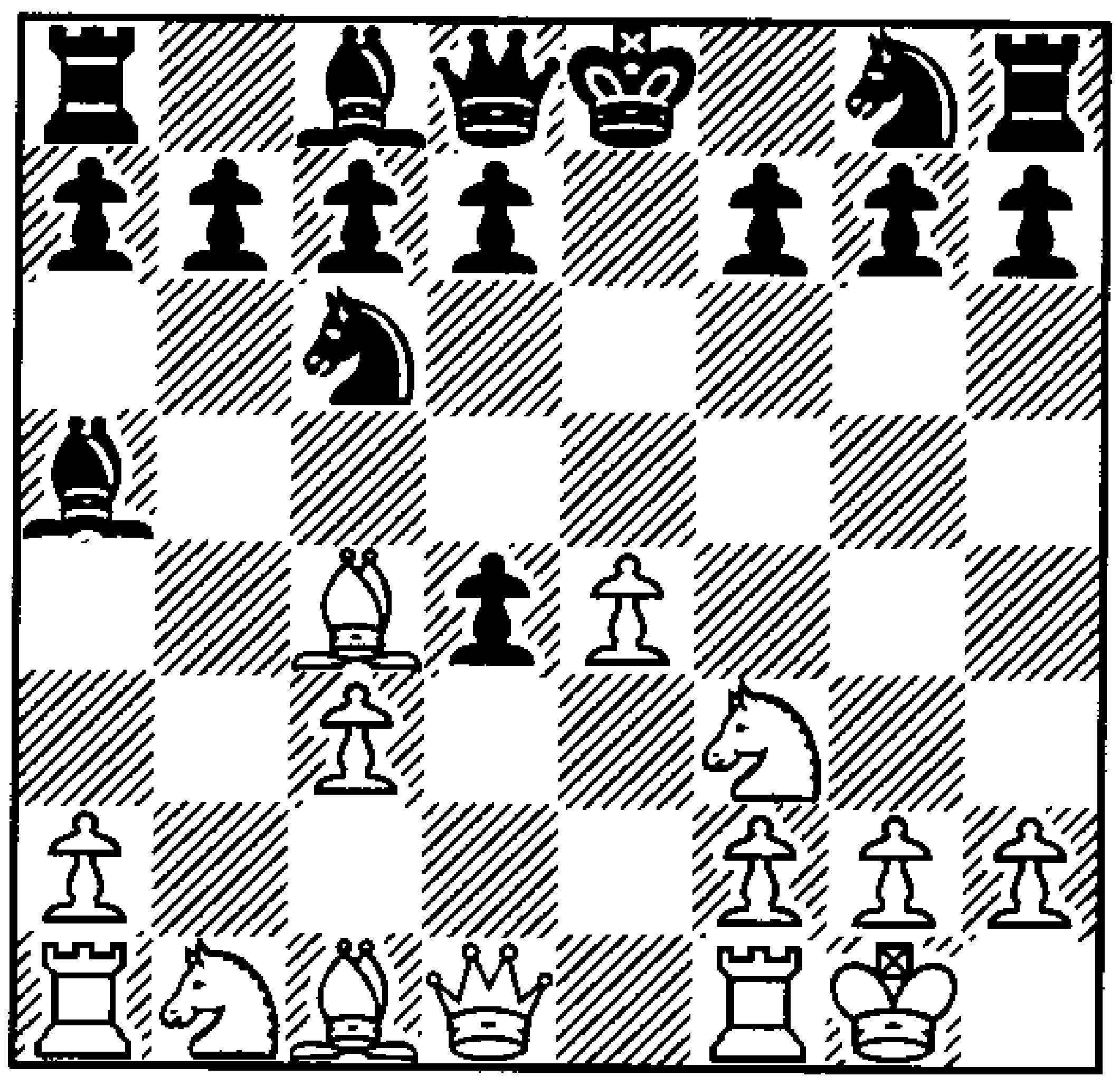
The classical defensive line. I should mention that Jean Dufresne was a pupil of Anderssen and quite a competent master, the author of some popular chess manuals.

Nowadays 5...♗e7 6 d4 ♘a5 is also in vogue, for example: 7 ♗e2!? (7 ♘xe5 ♘xc4 8 ♘xc4 d5 9 exd5 ♕xd5 10 ♘e3 is much more tedious) 7...exd4 8 ♕xd4! ♘f6 (8...♘c6!? 9 ♕xg7 ♗f6 10 ♕g3 d6 is unclear) 9 e5 ♘c6 10 ♕h4 ♘d5 11 ♕g3 g6 (11...0-0 12 ♗h6; 11...♔f8!?) 12 0-0 ♘b6 13 c4 d6 14 ♖d1 ♘d7 15 ♗h6! with a powerful initiative for the pawn and a win on the 25th move (Kasparov-Anand, Riga 1995). Incidentally, reverting to old gambits has caught many present-day players unawares, but here the dispute did not last long: everywhere an acceptable defence was found for Black.

6 d4! (if 6 0-0, then 6...d6 7 d4 ♗b6! is strong, Chigorin-Lasker, St Petersburg 1895/96 – *Game No.43*) **6...exd4**

In the 20th century 6...d6 7 ♕b3!? ♕d7 8 dxe5 ♗b6! was tried, with an unclear game.

7 0-0



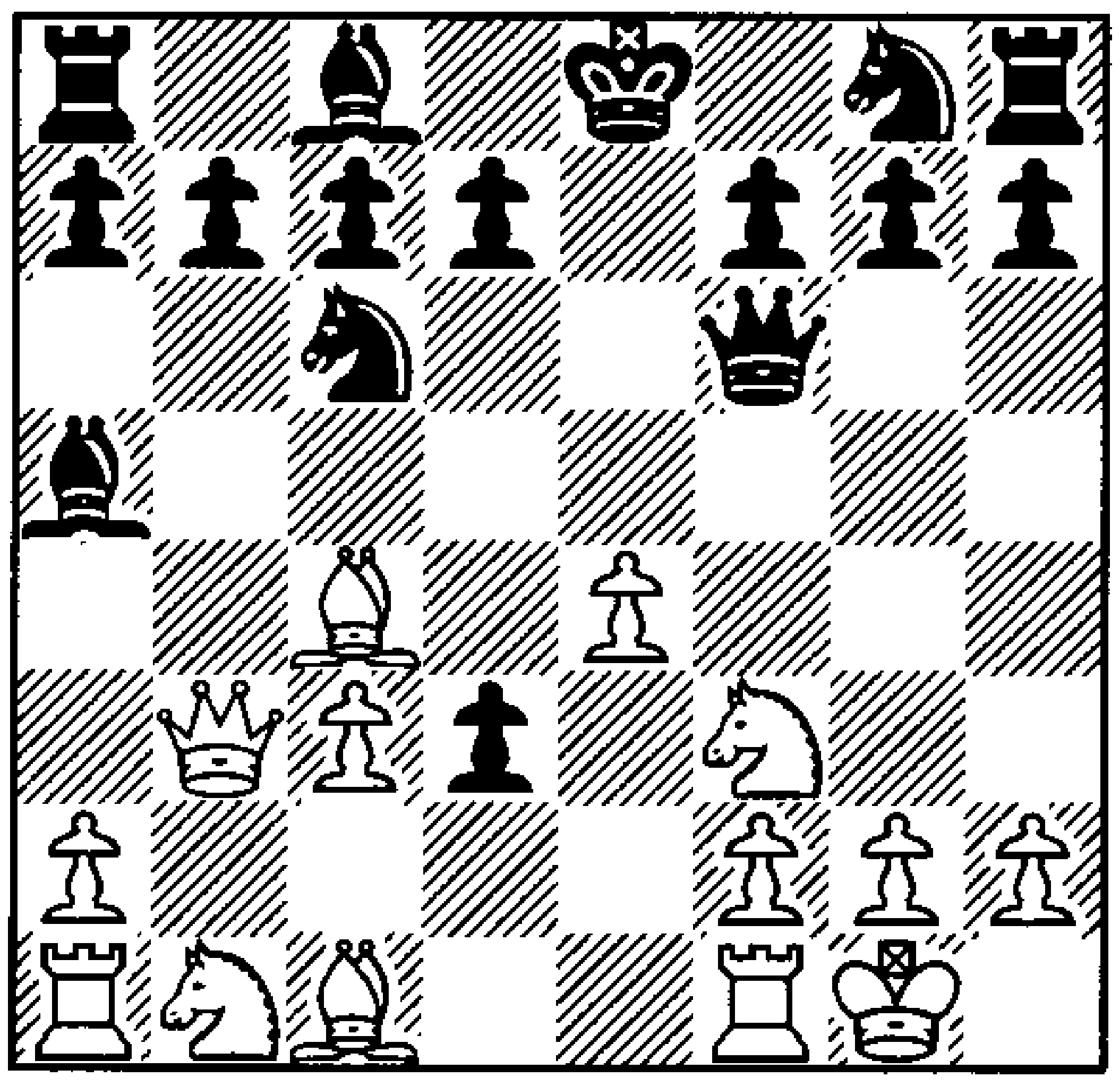
7...d3?!

Also insufficient is 7...dxc3?! 8 ♕b3 ♕f6 9 e5 ♕g6 10 ♘xc3 ♘ge7 (Anderssen-Dufresne, Berlin 1851), since after 11 ♗a3! Black's position is highly unpleasant. The correct course – 7...♘ge7! and 8...d5! – extended across the century from the Anderssen-Mieses match (Breslau 1867) to the games Short-Adams (Sarajevo 2000) and Morozevich-Adams (Wijk aan Zee 2001).

8 ♕b3!

A surprise: Dufresne was probably expecting 8 ♘g5?! ♘h6 9 e5, as Anderssen played in the matches with him and Mayet (Berlin 1851).

8...♕f6



9 e5

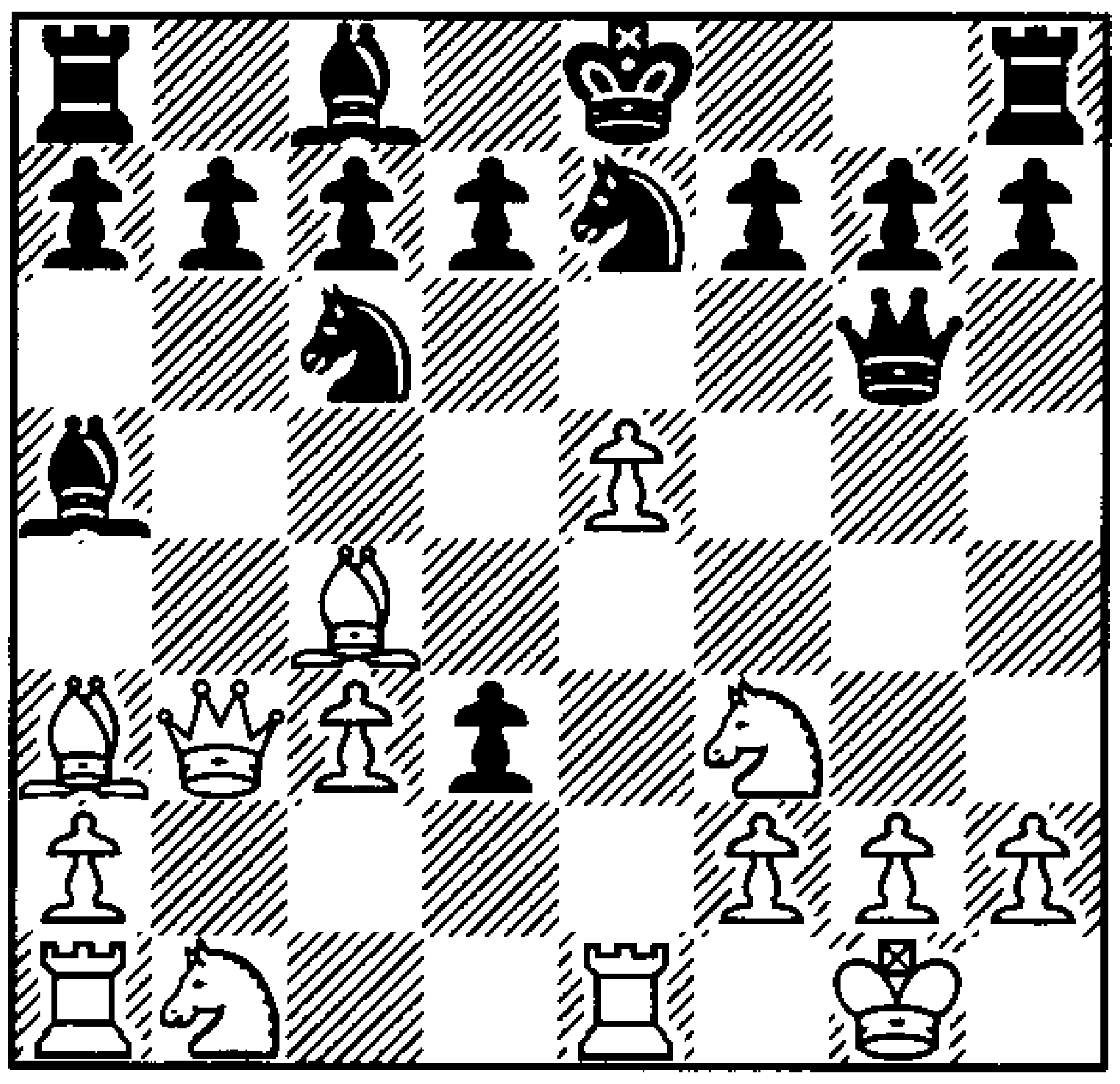
It is curious that in their 1855 match Dufresne was not afraid to go in for this position against Anderssen, but the latter persistently replied 9 ♖e1!? with the idea of 9...♘ge7 10 ♗g5 ♕g6 11 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 12 e5. Whereas Zukertort in his first match with Steinitz (London 11th matchgame 1872) was tempted by the unfavourable 9 ♗g5?! ♕g6 10 ♗xd3 ♘h6 11 ♘bd2 0-0 12 ♖ad1 ♗b6 13 ♗xh6 ♕xh6 14 e5 d5! 15 exd6 cxd6 etc.

9...♕g6 10 ♖e1 ♘ge7

Or 10...♗b6 11 ♕d1! ♘h6 12 ♗xd3 ♕h5 13 h3 with a strong initiative (Anderssen-Dufresne, Berlin 1855).

11 ♗a3

But not 11 ♘bd2? b5! 12 ♗xb5 ♖b8 13 ♕a4 ♗xc3 14 ♖b1 a6 15 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 16 ♕xc6 ♘xc6 17 ♖xb8 ♘xb8 with a won endgame for Black in Zukertort-Steinitz, London 9th matchgame 1872).



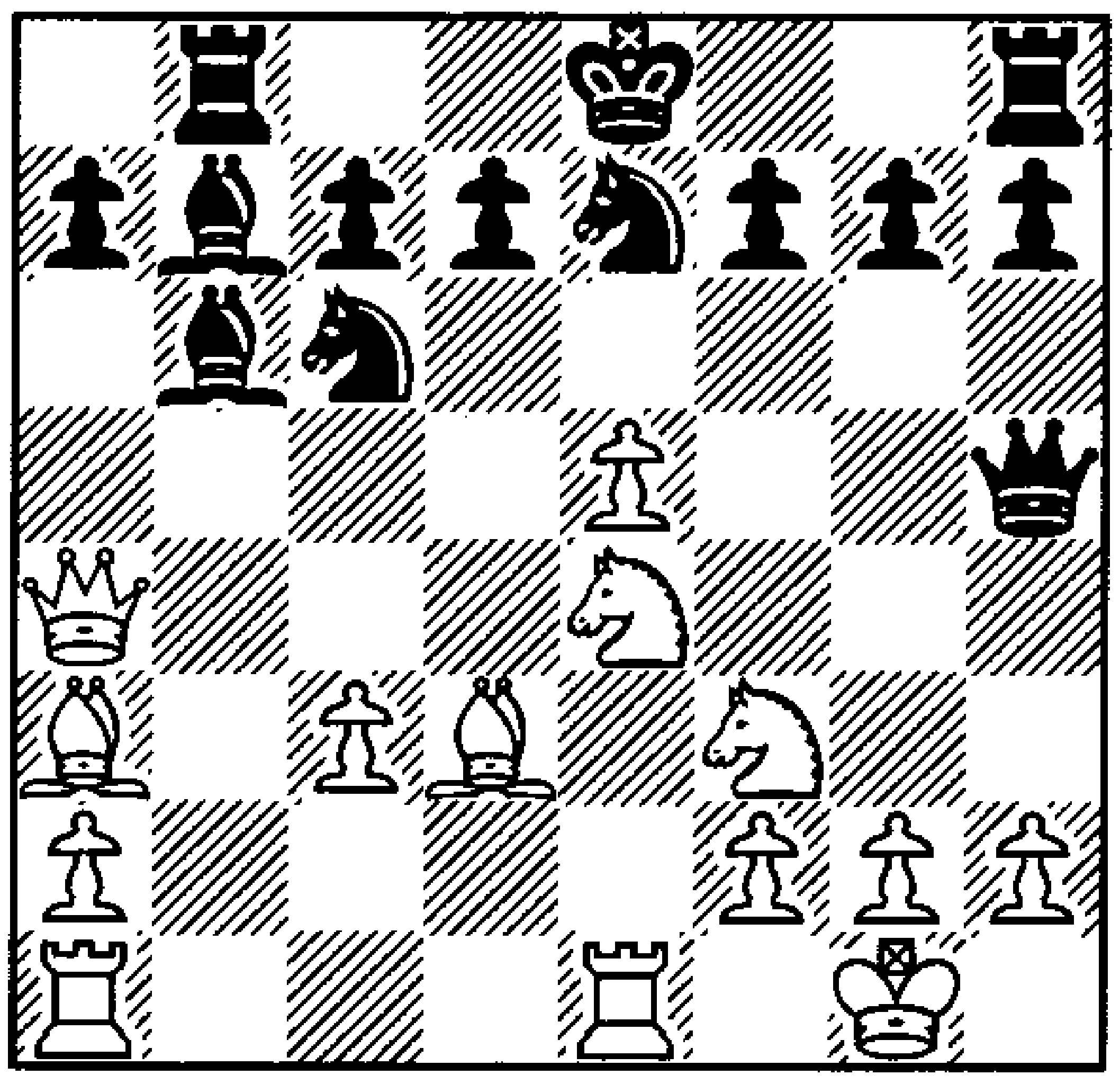
11...b5?!

'Black wants to develop his queenside, but 11...0-0 was better.' (Euwe) However, here too after 12 ♘bd2 ♗b6 13 ♕b1 and ♗xd3 White has a splendid attacking position.

12 ♕xb5 ♖b8 13 ♕a4 ♗b6 (13...0-0? 14 ♗xe7) **14 ♘bd2 ♗b7?!**

Also after 13...0-0 14 ♘e4 Black's position is unenviable.

15 ♘e4 ♕f5? (as Lasker pointed out, 15...d2! 16 ♘exd2 0-0 was now simply essential) **16 ♗xd3 ♕h5**



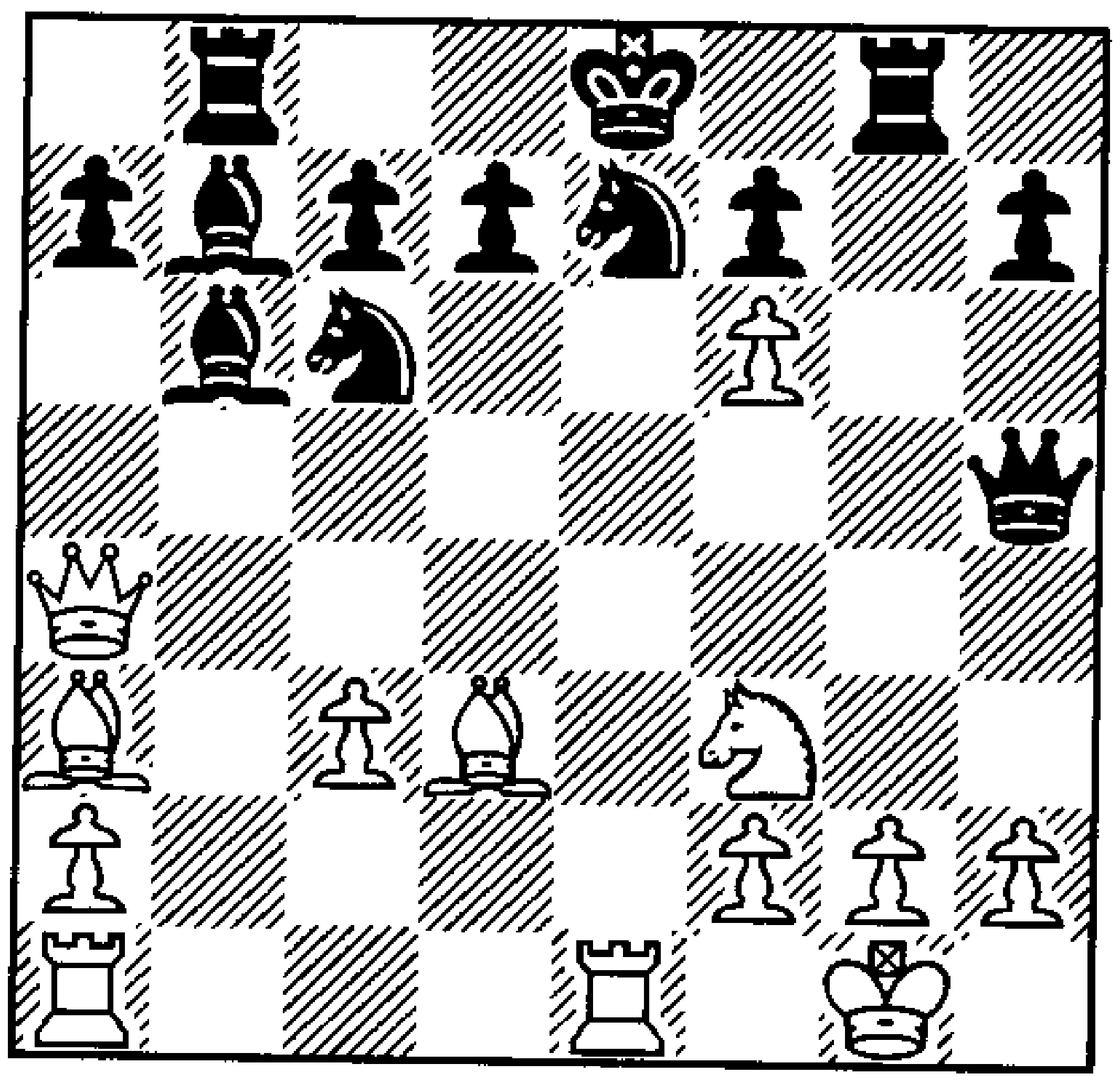
White has an enormous advantage. The time has come for resolute action, and Anderssen played in accordance with his romantic style and the demands of his time:

17 ♘f6+?!!

The two exclamation marks are for one of the most beautiful combinations in the history of chess. And the question mark is for the unnecessary complications: the prosaic 17 ♘g3 ♕h6 18 ♗c1 ♕e6 19 ♗c4 ♘d5 (19...♕g6 20 ♘h4 ♕g4 21 ♗xf7+) 20 ♘g5 ♘xc3 (20...♕g4 21 ♖e4) 21 ♕b3 would have concluded the game without any problems. But... the treasury of chess art would have lost a major masterpiece!

17...gxf6 18 exf6 ♖g8!

Black's last chance is a counterattack along the newly-opened g-file.



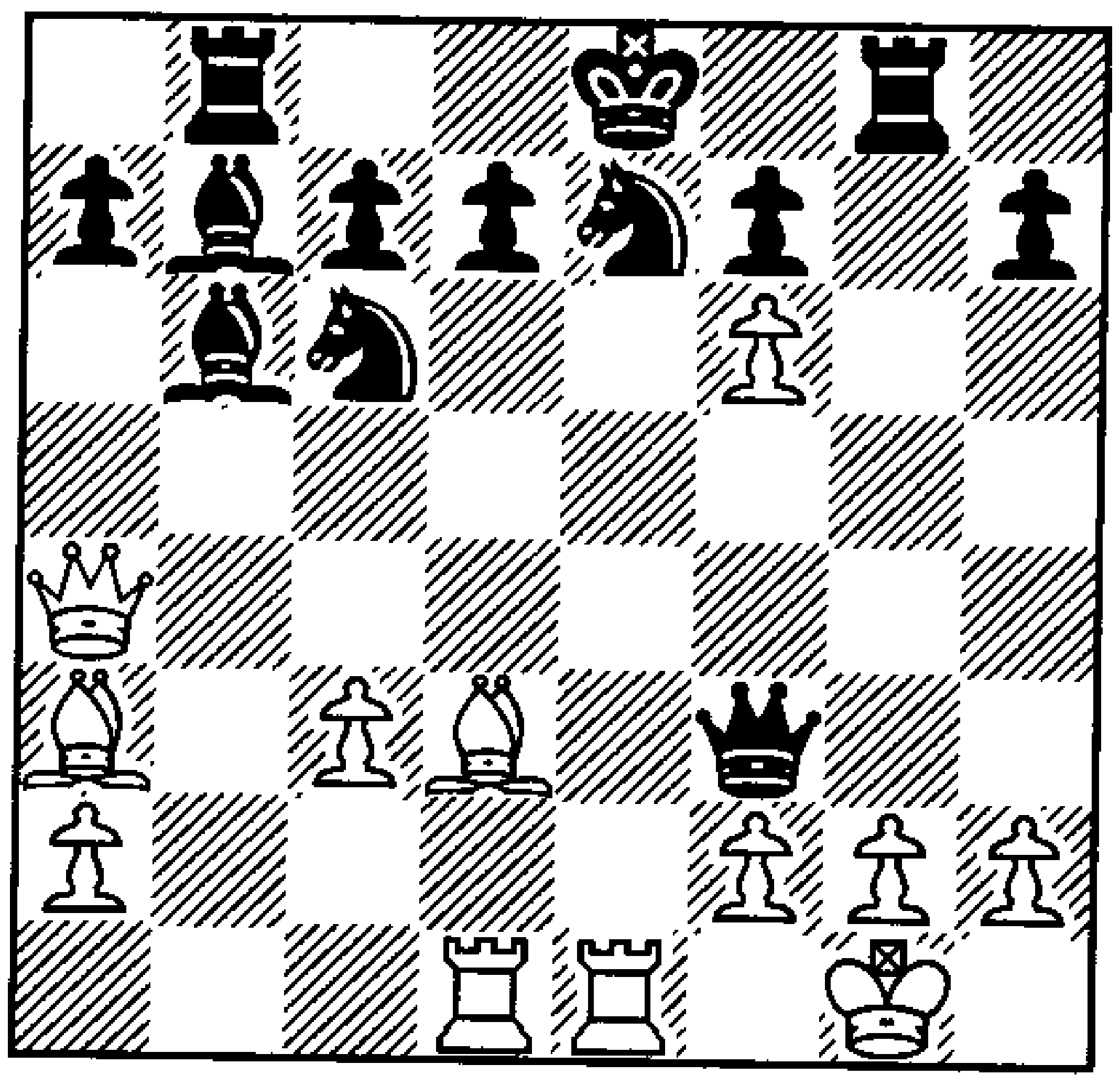
19 ♖ad1!?

'This is the greatly admired introduction to astounding sacrifices. Yet it cannot sustain criticism... White can win with 19 ♗e4 because his attack is irresistible, whereas Black's counterattack is then frustrated. For instance, 19...♕h3 20 g3 ♖xg3+ 21 hxg3 ♕xg3+ 22 ♔h1 ♗xf2 23 ♖e2 wins.' (Lasker) However, later the knockout blow 23...♘d4!! was found here. Therefore I would have preferred the line 23 ♗xe7! ♕h3+ 24 ♘h2 ♗xe1 25 ♖xe1 with the initiative.

19...♕xf3?

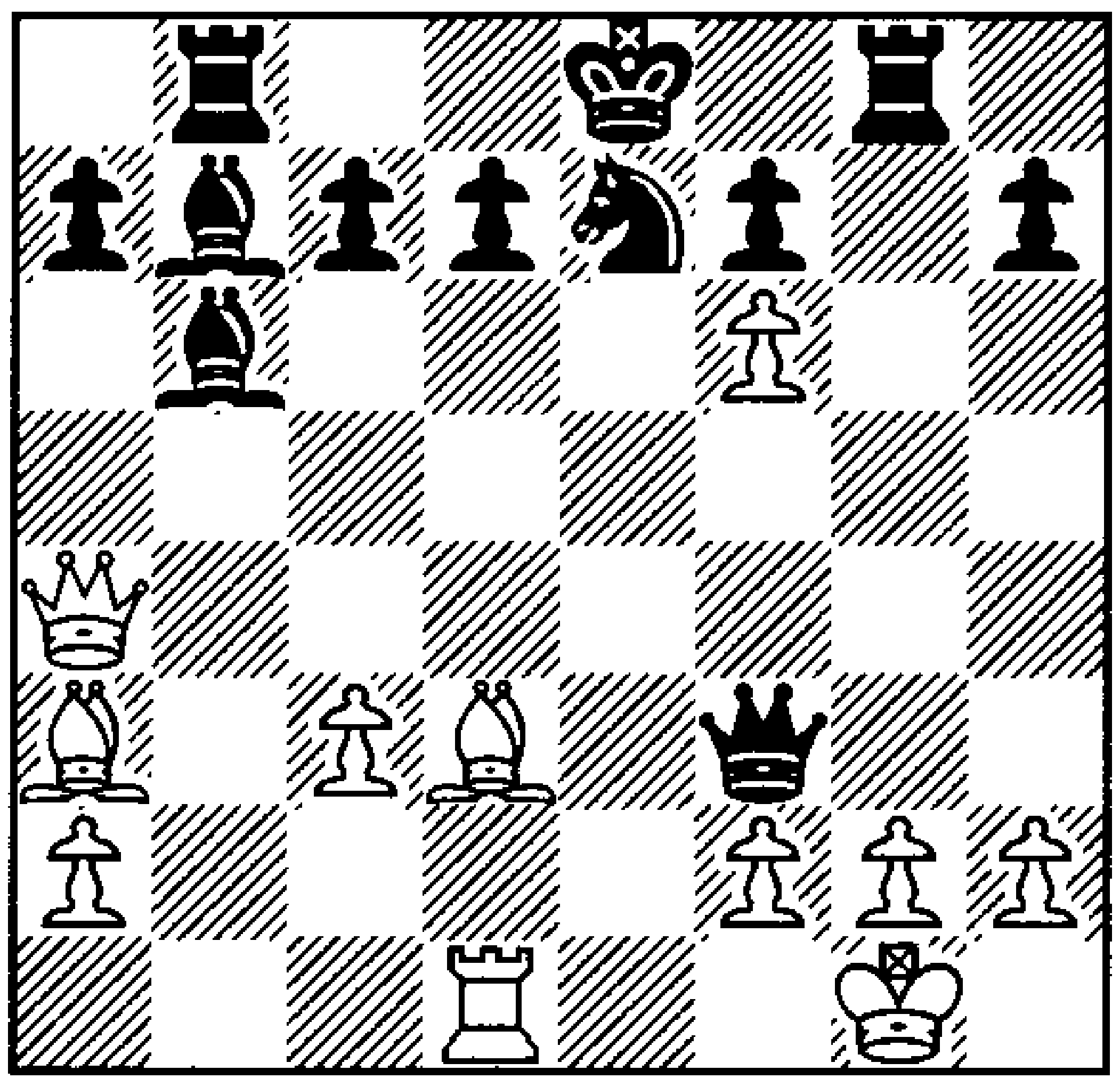
Lasker criticised White's previous move because of the possible reply 19...♖g4!, which was analysed by the German master Paul Lipke in *Deutsche Schachzeitung* (1898). I don't wish to tire you with all the numerous variations, which belong to more than one generation of players. I will merely point out that in 1930 Hoppe and Heckner tried to demonstrate a win for White, which at present cannot be found even by a computer. Thus, after 20 c4? ♖xg2+! (instead of 20...♖f4? 21 ♗g6! or 21 ♕b5 ♕h6 22 ♗f5 ♕xf6 23 ♖xd7!) 21 ♔xg2 ♕g4+ 22 ♔f1 ♕xf3 23 ♖xe7+ ♘xe7 24 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 25 ♗f5+ ♔e8 26 ♗d7+ ♔f8 the king hides at g8, and in the main variation 20 ♗c4 ♕f5 21 ♖xd7 ♔xd7 22 ♘e5+ ♔c8 23 ♘xg4 ♘d5 24 ♕d1 instead of 24...♘d8? 25 ♗d3! ♕d7 26 ♘e5 ♕e6 27 ♘xf7! winning, far better is 24...♘xf6! 25 ♗d3 ♕xg4 26 ♕xg4+ ♘xg4 27 ♗f5+ ♔d8 28 ♖d1+ ♘d4 29 ♗xg4 ♗d5 30 cxd4 ♗xa2 with a roughly equal endgame. Also unclear is 20 ♖e4!? ♖xe4 21 ♕xe4 d6 22 ♖e1! ♕g6! (but not 22...♘e5? 23 ♗b5+ c6 24 ♗a4! winning).

Therefore, 19...♖g4! would have made things much more difficult for White. However, can we really criticise Dufresne, who was tempted by a threat of mate in one move, and did not foresee the tricky idea of the combinative magician?



20 ♖xe7+! ♘xe7!?

To create a chess masterpiece, you really do need the generous participation of your opponent! A modern professional and, of course, a computer would without hesitation have replied 20...♔d8, thus avoiding an immediate rout: 21 ♖xd7+! ♔c8! (21...♔xd7 22 ♗f5+ ♔e8 23 ♗d7+ ♔d8 24 ♗xc6+ and mate) 22 ♖d8+! ♔xd8 (22...♖xd8 23 gxf3 wins; 22...♘xd8 23 ♕d7+!! – the same motif as in the game) 23 ♗e2+! ♘d4 24 ♗xf3 ♗xf3 25 g3! ♗xd1 26 ♕xd1 c5 27 cxd4 cxd4 28 ♗e7+ with a tedious, but won endgame. Neishtadt's recommendation of 23 ♗f5+ ♕xd1+ 24 ♕xd1+ ♘d4 25 g3 is less clear in view of 25...♖g5! 26 ♗h3 ♗f3!



21 ♕xd7+!! ♔xd7 22 ♗f5+ ♔e8 (or 22...♔c6 23 ♗d7 mate) **23 ♗d7+ ♔f8 24 ♗xe7 mate!**

'It is noteworthy that in both these celebrated games Anderssen gives mate with a bishop on e7.' (Euwe)

In addition to his teaching work Anderssen contributed to the magazine *Schachzeitung* (1851-1859) and *Neue Berliner Schachzeitung* (1864-1871). In seven years after 1851 he played only two(!) serious games and arrived for his highly important match with Morphy (which will be described later) in far from his best form. However, after Morphy's departure he restored his reputation of the strongest player in the world, by winning a match against the next challenger Ignác Kolisch (1861) and then also the second major London international tournament (1862), which was held, incidentally, on the all-play-all system.

Despite the obvious difference in class of the two players, the following game also gives a clear impression of the chess fashion during Anderssen's time.

Game 5

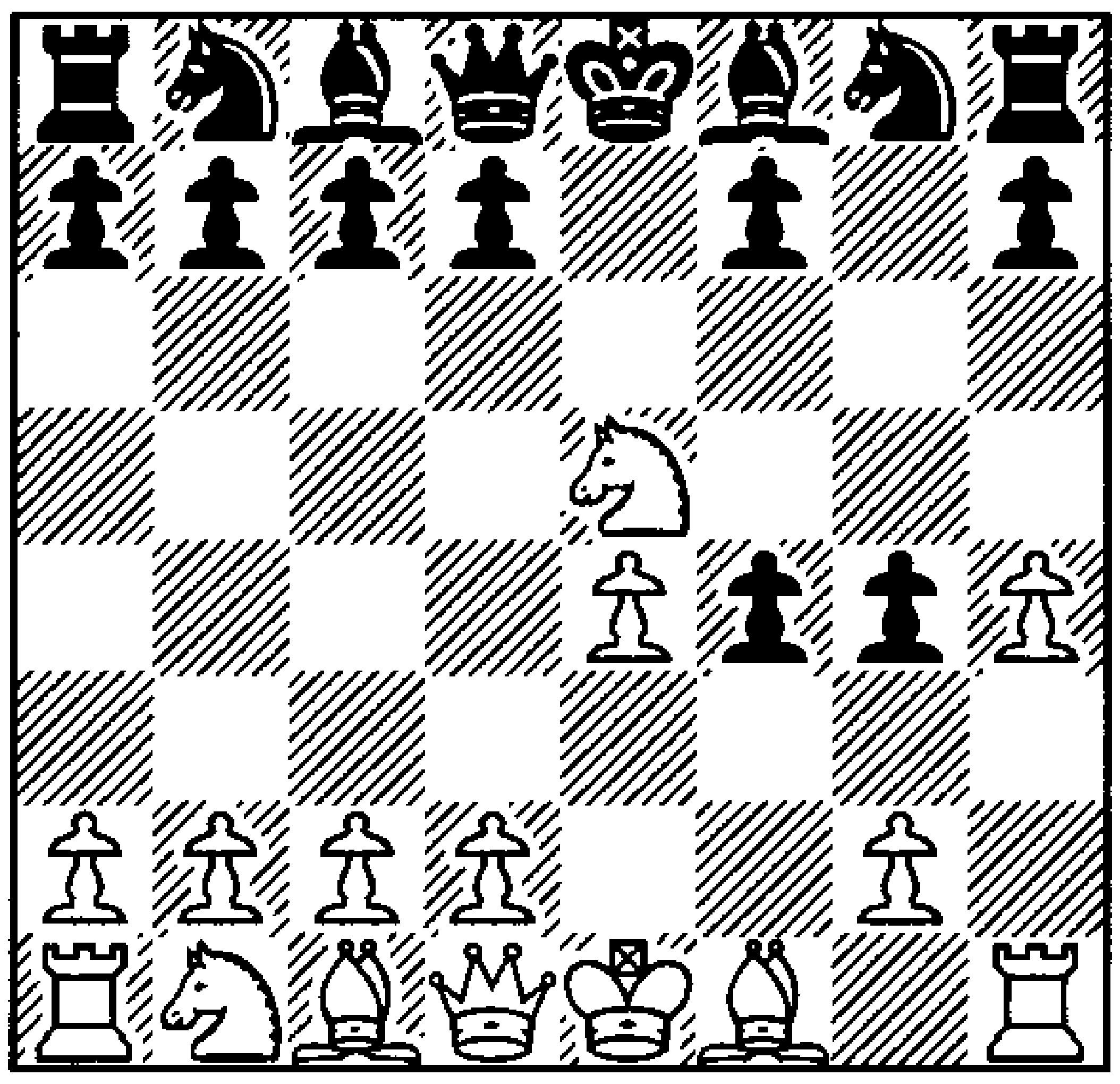
J.Rosanes-A.Anderssen

Breslau 1863

King's Gambit C39

1 e4 e5 2 f4 exf4 3 ♘f3 g5 4 h4 g4 5 ♘e5

The Kieseritzky Gambit was one of the theoretical *tabiyas* of the 19th century.



5...♘f6!

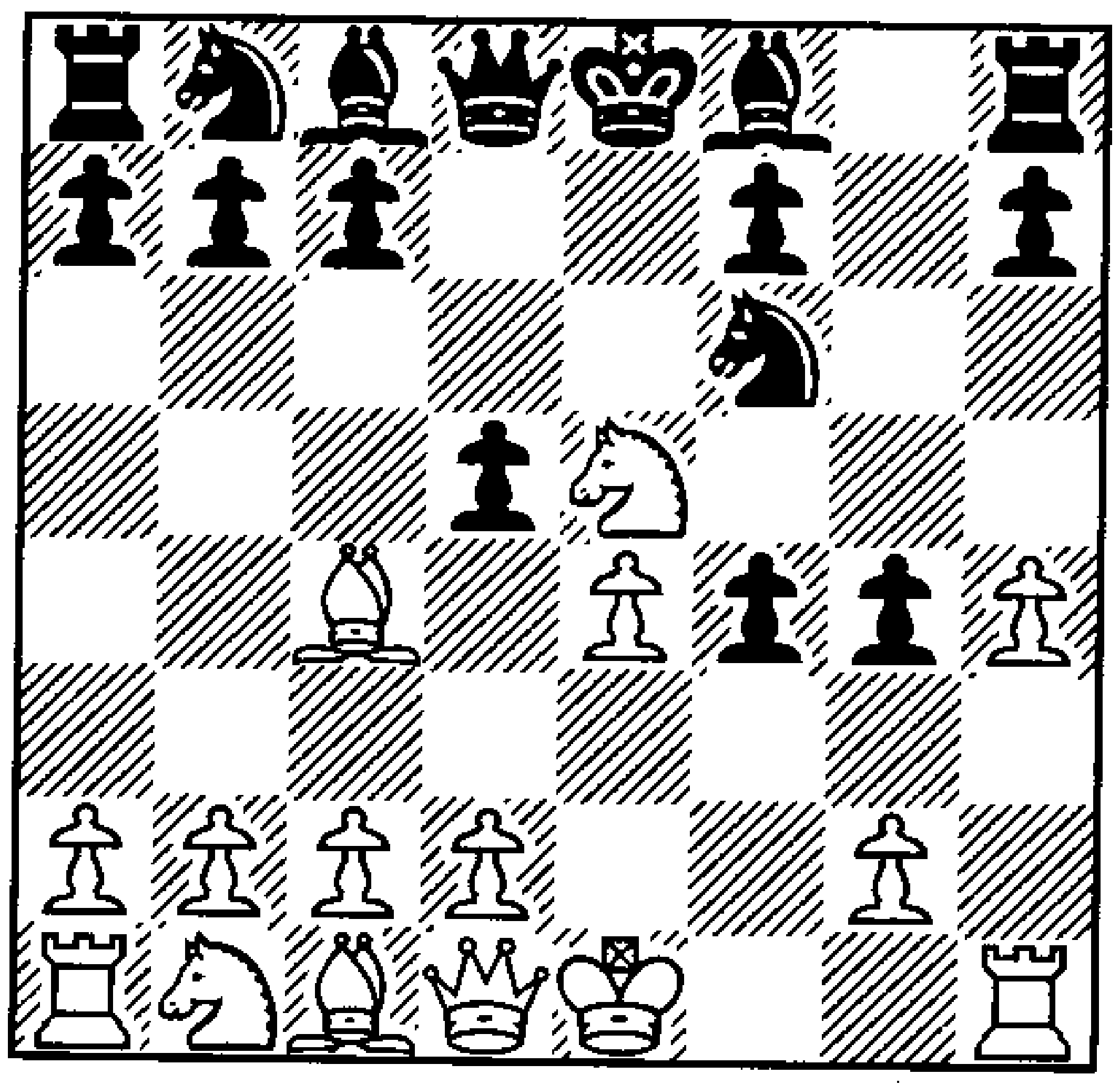
In Anderssen's games there several times occurred 5...♗g7 6 ♘xg4 or 6 d4, and 5...h5 6 ♗c4 ♖h7 (6...♘h6? 7 d4 d6 8 ♘d3 f3 9 gxf3 etc.) 7 d4, and 5...d6!? 6 ♘xg4 – this, following the example of grandmaster Fedorov, is popular even today: Black replies 6...♘f6 (not being tempted by the old line 6...♗e7 7 d4 ♗xh4+ 8 ♘f2 ♕g5), when Federov initially played 7 ♘f2 ♖g8 8 d4 ♗h6 9 ♘c3 ♘c6! (9...♕e7 10 ♘d3 ♗g4 has also occurred) 10 ♘d5 ♘xd5 11 exd5 ♘e7 12 ♕e2 etc., but after 11...♕e7+! 12 ♗e2 ♘b4 13 c4 ♗f5! 14 ♕a4+ ♔f8 15 ♕xb4 ♖e8 16 ♕d2 ♖xg2 17 ♔f1 ♖g3 18 ♕d1 ♗e4 19 ♖h2 f5 20 ♘xe4 fxe4 21 ♗g4 e3 22 ♗f3 ♕g7 23 ♖h1 ♖g2! with crushing threats (Federov-Shirov, Polanica Zdroj 2000), but then switched to 7 ♘xf6+! ♕xf6 8 ♘c3 ♘c6 (8...c6?! 9 ♗e2! ♖g8 10 ♗f3) 9 ♘d5 ♕g6 10 d3 ♕g3+ 11 ♔d2 ♘e7 12 ♕e1 (but not 12 ♘xc7+? ♔d8 13 ♘xa8 ♕e3+ 14 ♔c3 ♗g7+ 15 ♔b3 ♗e6+) 12...♘xd5 13 exd5+ ♗e7 with equal chances in Fedorov-Anand, Wijk aan Zee 2001.

6 ♗c4

6 ♘xg4?! is dubious. In a series of friendly games with Morphy (Paris 1858) Anderssen first refuted 6...d5? – by 7 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 8 ♕e2! ♗d6 9 ♘c3 c6 10 d4! ♕xd4 11 ♗d2 ♖g8 12 exd5+ ♔d8 13 0-0-0! ♗g4 14 ♕e4 ♕xe4 15 ♘xe4 ♗xd1 16 ♘xd6 ♗h5 17 ♗xf4 cxd5 18 ♘xb7+ ♔e7 19 ♗b5!, and then he showed the correct way: 6...♘xe4! 7 d3 ♘g3 8 ♗xf4 ♘xh1 9 ♕e2+ ♕e7 10 ♘f6+ ♔d8 11 ♗xc7+ ♔xc7 12 ♘d5+ ♔d8 13 ♘xe7 ♗xe7 14 ♕g4 (14 ♕h5?! ♘g3!) 14...d6 15 ♕f4 ♖g8! with sufficient compensation for the queen.

However, even after the currently fashionable 6 d4 d6 (6...♗g7?! 7 ♘c3 d6 8 ♘d3 0-0 9 ♘xf4 Anderssen-Zukertort, Breslau 1866) 7 ♘d3 White cannot build up any particular momentum: 7...♘xe4 8 ♗xf4 ♗g7 (Spassky-Fischer, Mar del Plata 1960; 8...♕e7!?) 9 c3 ♕e7! with sharp play, or 7...♘c6!? 8 c3 (8 ♘c3 ♘xd4 9 ♘xf4 ♘e6!) 8...♘xe4 9 ♗xf4 d5 10 ♘d2 ♗d6 11 ♘e5 0-0 (11...♕f6!?) 12 ♘xe4 dxe4 13 ♕c2 ♕f6 with excellent play for Black (Fedorov-Ivanchuk, Wijk aan Zee 2001).

6...d5! (this is the point!)



7 exd5 ♗d6 8 d4

Later the American professor and millionaire Isaac Rice devised the gambit 8 0-0 ♗xe5 9 ♖e1 and, as a patron, did everything possible to encourage the testing of his idea in thematic events. Lasker and Chigorin even played an entire match (Brighton 1903) on the theme of 9...♕e7 10 c3 f3!? (10...♘h5 11 d4 ♘d7 is even better) 11 d4 ♘e4 12 ♖xe4 ♗h2+ 13 ♔xh2 ♕xe4 14 g3 0-0, and Black (Chigorin) won 3½-2½. I think that this indicates not the weakness of the world champion's play, but the defects of White's gambit...

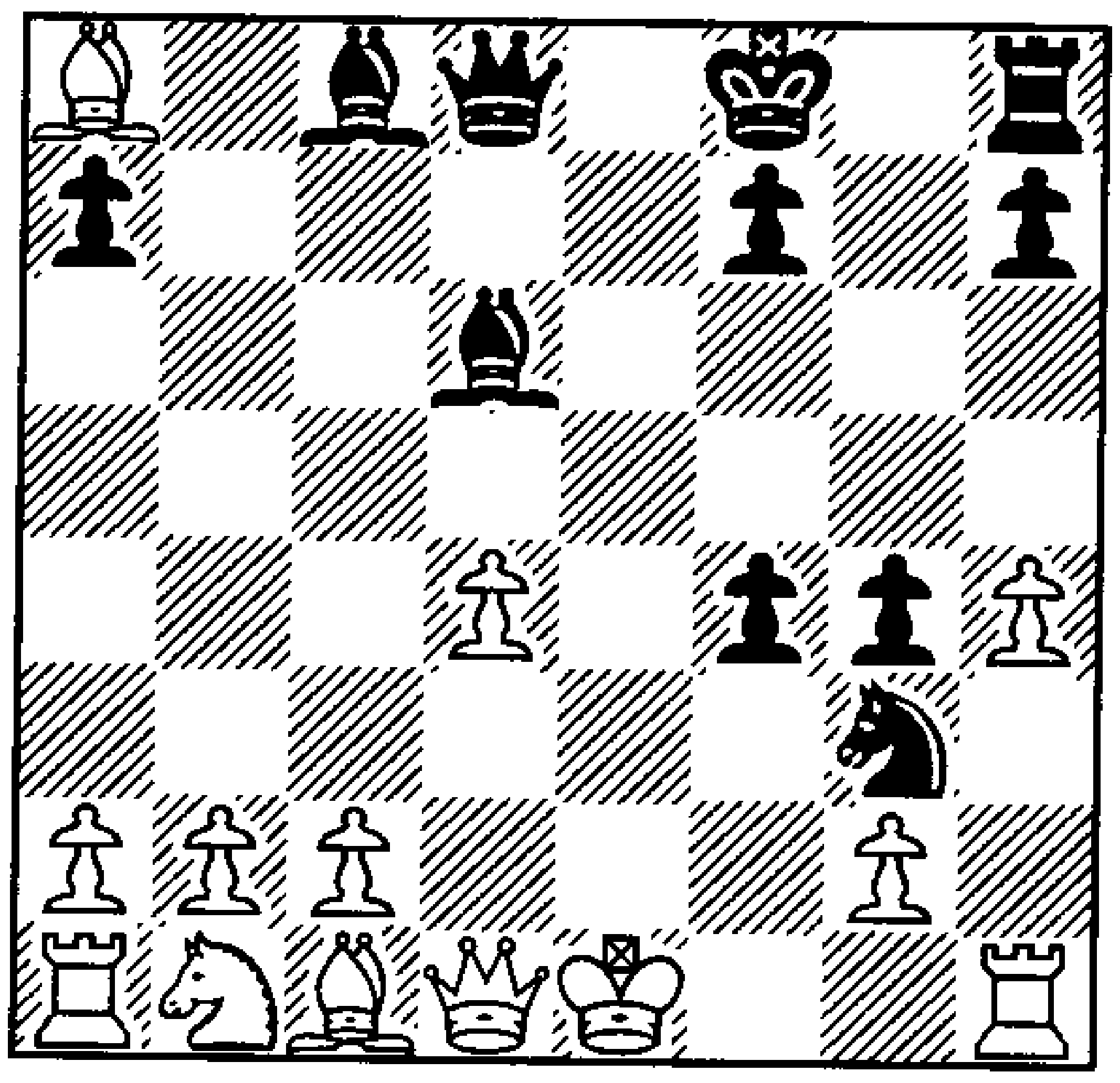
8...♘h5

More accurate than 8...♕e7?! 9 ♗xf4 ♘h5 10 g3! (a year earlier Anderssen tried to uphold this position as White) and probably than 8...0-0 9 0-0! (but not 9 ♗xf4? ♘h5 10 g3 f6 11 ♘d3 ♘xg3! Pillsbury-Chigorin, Vienna 1903) 9...♘h5 10 ♘xg4 ♕xh4 11 ♘h2 ♘g3 (11...♖e8 12 ♘c3! Alapin) 12 ♖e1 ♘d7 13 ♘d2 ♘f6 14 ♘df3 ♕h5 15 ♖e5! with the initiative (Neustadtl-Pierce, correspondence 1903).

9 ♗b5+?

Correct is 9 0-0! (9 ♘c3 ♕e7!) 9...♕xh4 10 ♕e1. It is amusing that Rosanes copies the play of his opponent against Hirschfeld (Berlin 1860), where Black met the bishop check with 9...♔f8?! But Anderssen had not been idle and he had prepared an excellent sacrifice of a pawn, and then of a whole rook!

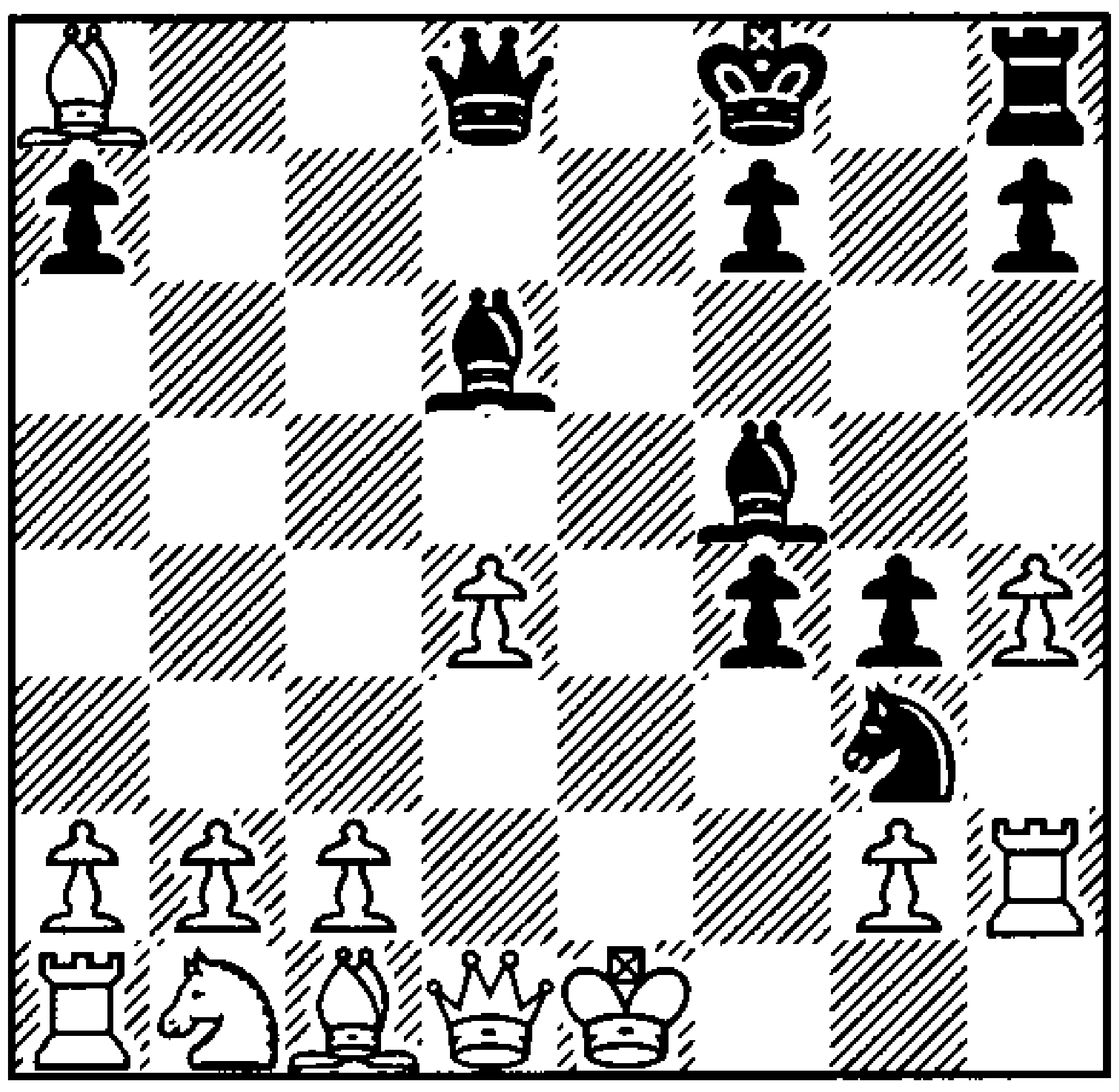
9...c6! 10 dxc6 bxc6! 11 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 12 ♗xc6+ ♔f8! 13 ♗xa8 ♘g3



14 ♖h2

Rosanes (a little-known club player) holds on to the material, apparently not realising that Black has ultra-powerful compensation for the sacrificed rook. However, it is hard to offer White any good advice. For example, in the event of 14 ♔f2 ♘xh1+ 15 ♕xh1 g3+ 16 ♔e1 (16 ♔g1 ♗c5!; 16 ♔f3 ♖g8 17 ♗xf4 ♕f6 etc.) 16...♕e7+ 17 ♔d1 ♗g4+ 18 ♗f3 ♗xf3+ 19 gxf3 ♖g8 20 ♕g2 ♕xh4 21 ♔e2 ♕h2 22 ♔f1 h5 the advance of the h-pawn is decisive.

14...♗f5 (Harrwitz's suggestion of 14...♕e7+ 15 ♔f2 ♘e4+! is also good)



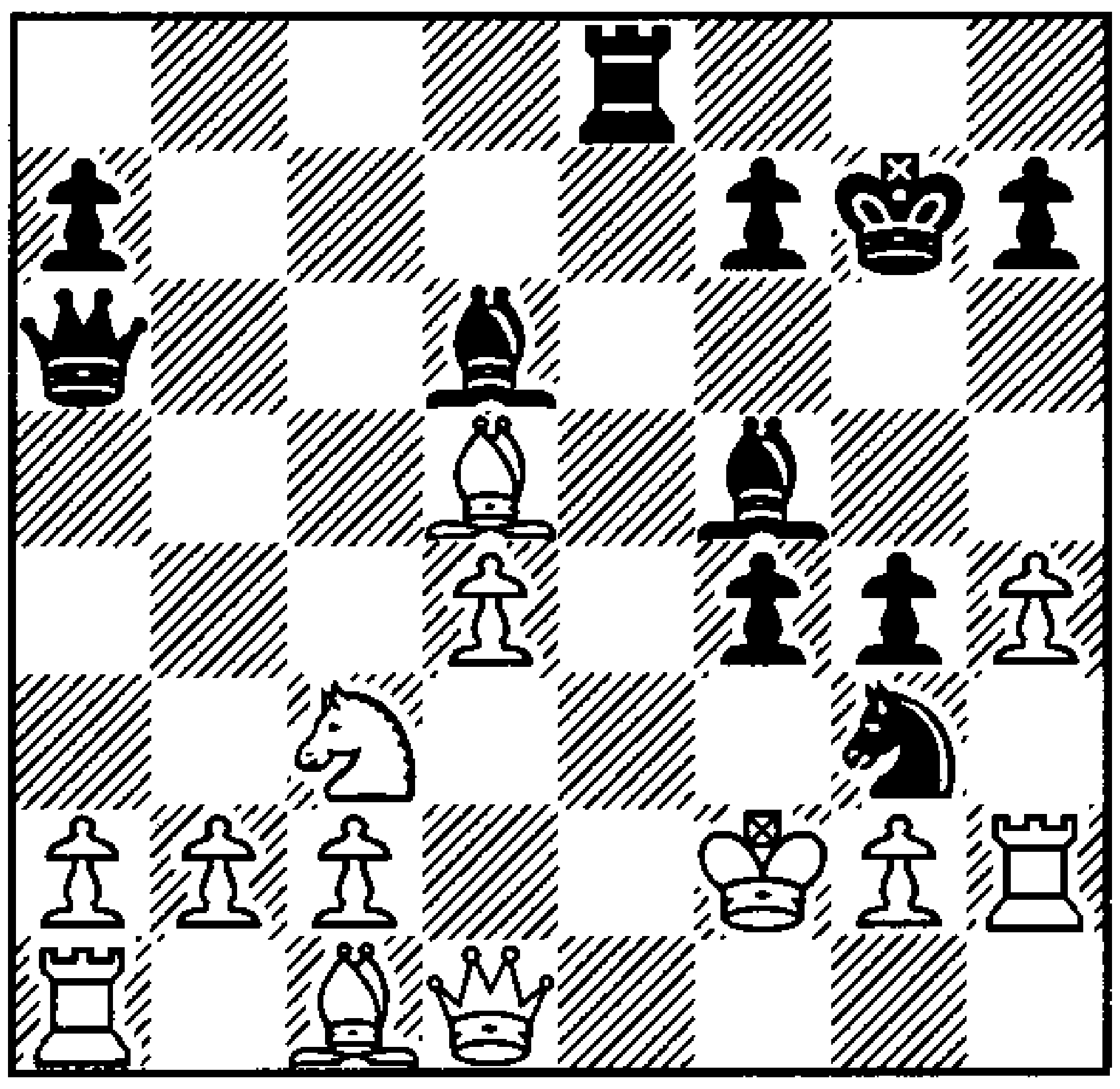
15 ♗d5

After the more tenacious, in Réti's opinion, 15 ♗c6 there is 15...♕e7+ 16 ♔f2 ♘e4+ 17 ♗xe4 g3+ 18 ♔g1 gxh2+ etc.

16...♔g7 (making way for the rook) **16 ♘c3 ♖e8+ 17 ♔f2 ♕b6**

Many modern players would probably regard Anderssen's rook sacrifice with mistrust and caution, but meanwhile the threat of ...♗e5! is already decisive.

18 ♘a4 ♕a6 (and now the threat is 19...♕e2+ 20 ♕xe2 ♖xe2+, 21...♖e1+ and 22...♖f1 mate) **19 ♘c3**



Also in the event of 19 c4 ♕xa4! 20 b3 (20 ♕xa4 ♖e2+ leads to mate) 20...♕d7 White has no defence.

19...♗e5!! (another 'quiet' move before the decisive combination) **20 a4?**

Intending to block the queen by 21 ♘b5, but allowing a highly spectacular mate. Also clearly bad was 20 dxe5? ♕b6+ 21 ♔e1 ♕g1+ 22 ♔d2 ♕e3 mate. However, even the best, computer defence 20 ♔g1 would not have saved White from a rout: 20...♕b6 (here the 20...♕f1+? idea no longer works: 21 ♕xf1 ♗xd4+ 22 ♗e3!) 21 ♖h1 ♗xd4+ 22 ♔h2 ♕f6!

Here Anderssen announced mate in four: 20...♕f1+!! (diversion!) 21 ♕xf1 ♗xd4+ 22 ♗e3 ♖xe3 (and, whatever White does, mate in one move is inevitable) 23 ♔g1 ♖e1 mate.

Of Anderssen's other exploits, mention should be made of his fantastic match in 1866 with Steinitz (which will be described later), his win in a match against his highly talented pupil Zukertort (1868), and his first prize in the strong double-round tournament in Baden-Baden (1870), sustained by two wins against Steinitz!

Later the first world champion was to say about Anderssen: 'This was the greatest master of all times. His brilliant style, the beauty of his combinations and the depth of thought were remarkable...'

It was for the sake of beauty that in any position he would seek drastic measures and would boldly burn his boats behind him, overstepping the safety margin. But in defence he was much weaker, asserting that 'the best form of defence is attack!' Such play was admired, but the progress of chess was inexorable, and the old combinative school led by Anderssen proved powerless against the modernised technique of Morphy (and then also Steinitz), which was based on a sound positional foundation.

The American Legend

Paul Charles Morphy (22 June 1837 – 10 July 1884) was born in New Orleans, in the state of Louisiana. His father came from a distinguished Creole family of Spanish and Irish extraction, while his mother was French. In Paul's family, chess was played by all the men: his grandfather, father, elder brother and his Uncle Ernest, one of the strongest players in the town. After learning to play chess at the age of ten, already when he was twelve he inflicted a spectacular defeat on the local maestro Rousseau (this was Morphy's first published game), and soon he also defeated Löwenthal, who was on a tour across the southern states of the USA.

Paul was a real child prodigy: he astonished his family with his memory and with his quick grasp of everything. His play was distinguished by its inventiveness, precise calculation and the methodical implementation of his plans. And most important, gradually the young Morphy became the most erudite player of his time. Fluent in French, English, Spanish and German, he read Philidor's *L'analyse*, the Parisian magazine *La Régence*, Staunton's *Chess Player's Chronicle*, and possibly also Anderssen's *Schachzeitung* (at least, he knew all of Anderssen's published games). He studied Bilguer's 400-page *Handbuch* – which consisted partly of opening analyses in tabular form, and also Staunton's *Chess Player's Handbook*. 'These books,' considers Fischer, 'are better than modern ones; there has been no significant improvement since then in King Pawn openings, and Morphy's natural talents would be more than sufficient for him to vanquish the best twentieth century players.'

(Fischer is eccentric always and in everything, including his opinions. In the 1960s the theory of the open games may indeed 'not have advanced' yet, but by the start of the 21st century it had undergone revolutionary changes!).

After shining at college, in two years Paul completed the entire course at Louisiana University and at the age of 19 he became a qualified lawyer. But since in the USA it was possible to work in this field only from the age of 21, for the moment he decided to devote himself entirely to his favourite game – seeing as the chess boom reigning after the first international tournament in London had also reached the New World. In the autumn of 1857 the first American Chess Congress took place, attracting the 16 best players in the country. Like the London event, it was held on the knockout system: mini-matches of the first to win three games, and in the final – five.

Morphy easily reached the final (nine wins and one draw!), where he crushed (+5 -1 =2) the as yet little-known German Louis Paulsen, who was then living in the USA. Moreover, he played quickly, as usual, whereas his opponent played very slowly, and since the time for thinking was not restricted, the games lasted 10-11 hours, and the drawn second game as long as 15 hours (out of which Paulsen thought for 12!). The most famous game of the match is the sixth.

Game 6
L.Paulsen-P.Morphy
First American Congress, New York 1857
Four Knights Game C48

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗b5 ♗c5

Much quieter is 4...♗b4, while the Marshall-Rubinstein move 4...♘d4 was still half a century away.

5 0-0

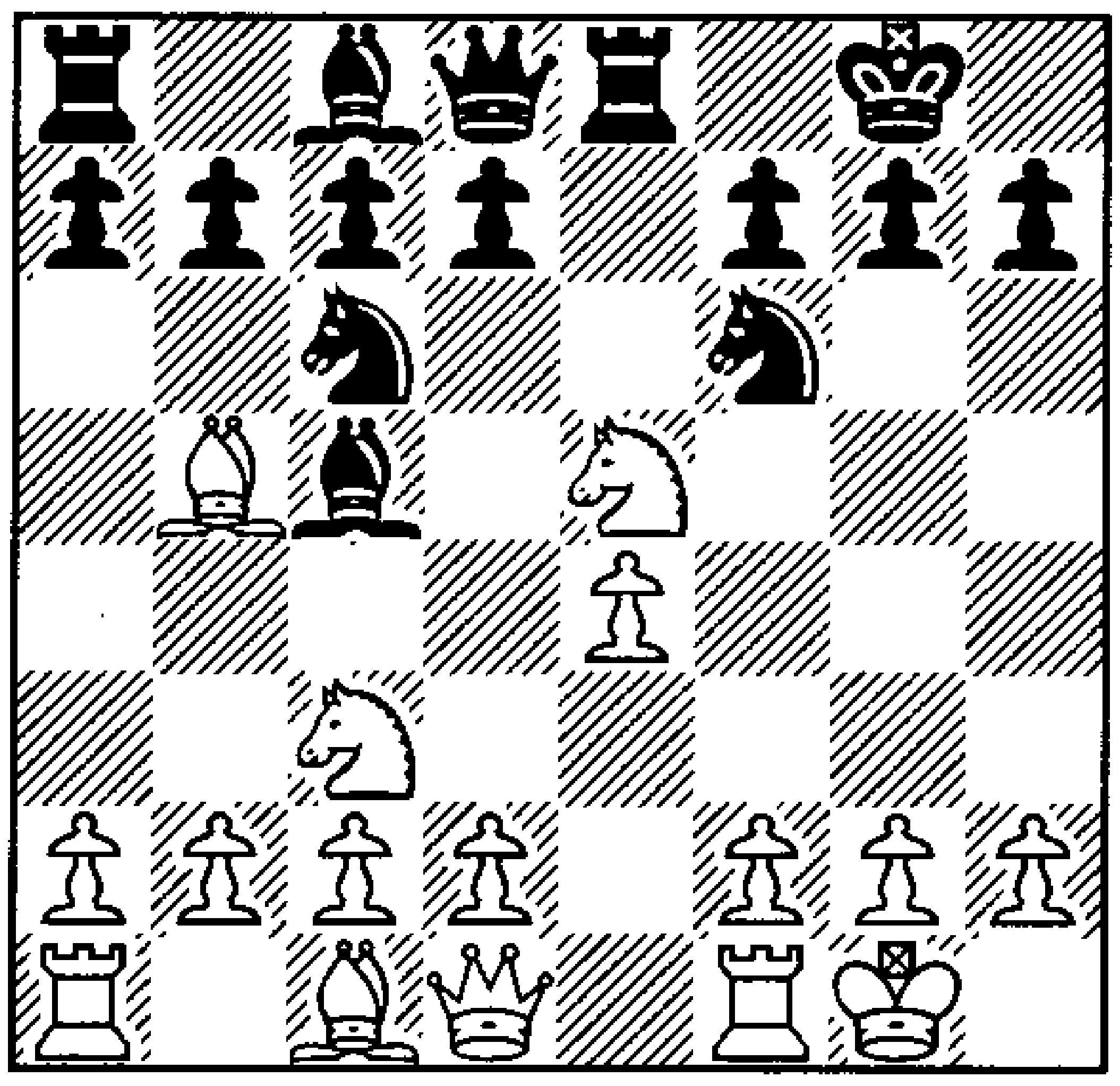
If 5 ♘xe5 it is considered quite safe to reply 5...♘xe5 (but not 5...♗xf2+?! 6 ♔xf2 ♘xe5 7 d4) 6 d4 ♗d6 (after 6...♗b4 7 dxe5 ♘xe4 8 ♕d4! Black fails to equalise) 7 f4 (7 dxe5 ♗xe5 is equal) 7...♘c6 (inferior is 7...♘g6?! 8 e5 Janowski-Lasker, Cambridge Springs 1904) 8 e5 ♗b4 9 d5 (9 exf6 ♕xf6 is equal) 9...♘e4! 10 ♕d3 ♘xc3+ 11 bxc3 ♗e7.

5...0-0

Morphy sacrifices a pawn. If 5...d6, then 6 d4 exd4 7 ♘xd4 ♗d7 8 ♘f5! (Paulsen-Zukertort, Leipzig 1877).

6 ♘xe5 ♖e8?!

For the pioneers it is always difficult. Later both 6...♗d4?! (Schlechter) and 6...♘d4?! (Marshall) were tried, but the main variation became 6...♘xe5 7 d4 ♗d6 8 f4 (8 dxe5 ♗xe5 is level, as in Paulsen-Winawer, Baden-Baden 1870) 8...♘c6 9 e5 ♗e7! (9...a6 10 ♗e2 Short-Adams, England 1991; after 9...♗b4 10 d5 it is no longer possible to play 10...♘e4, and 10...a6 11 ♗e2 ♗c5+ 12 ♔h1 ♘xd5 13 ♕xd5 d6 nevertheless favours White) 10 d5 (10 exf6 ♗xf6 is equal) 10...♘b4 (10...♗c5+ 11 ♔h1 ♘d4 12 exf6 ♕xf6 13 ♘e4 ♕e7 14 ♗d3 ♗b6 15 f5 with an attack, Paulsen-Anderssen, Leipzig 1877) 11 exf6 (11 d6!? cxd6 12 exf6) 11...♗xf6 12 a3 (12 ♘e4!?) 12...♗xc3 13 bxc3 ♘xd5 14 ♕xd5 c6 15 ♕d3 cxb5 16 f5 with a slight initiative.



7 ♘xc6?!

7 ♘f3! gives an advantage, for example: 7...♘xe4 8 d4 (8 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 9 d3 ♖e8 10 d4 is also good) 8...♘xc3 9 bxc3 ♗f8 (9...Be7?! 10 d5 ♘b8 11 ♗f4 Maróczy-Pillsbury, Nuremberg 1896) 10 d5 ♘e5 11 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 12 ♗f4 ♖e8 13 ♕f3 c6 14 ♗d3 or 7...♘d4 8 e5 ♘xf3+ 9 gxf3! (Teichmann-Rubinstein, San Sebastian 1912).

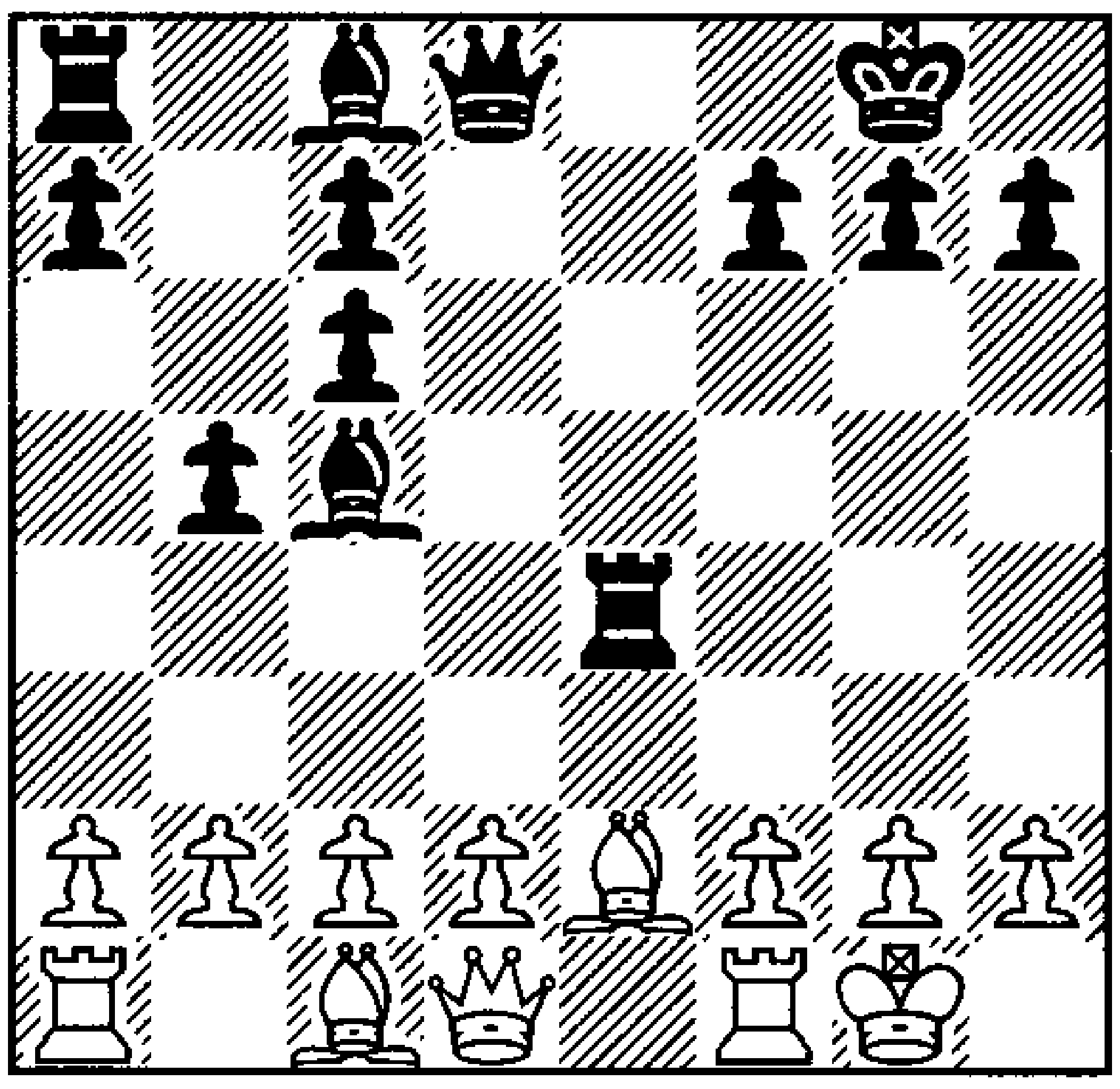
7...dxc6 8 ♗c4 b5 (but not immediately 8...♘xe4? in view of 9 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 10 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 11 ♕f3+) **9 ♗e2**

9 ♗b3?! ♗g4 10 ♕e1 b4 11 ♘d1 ♖xe4 12 ♘e3 is hardly advantageous to White.

9...♘xe4 10 ♘xe4

Of course, not 10 ♗f3? ♘xf2! 11 ♖xf2 ♕d4 12 ♘e4 (12 ♕f1? ♕xf2+! 13 ♕xf2 ♖e1 mate) 12...♖xe4! and wins.

10...♖xe4

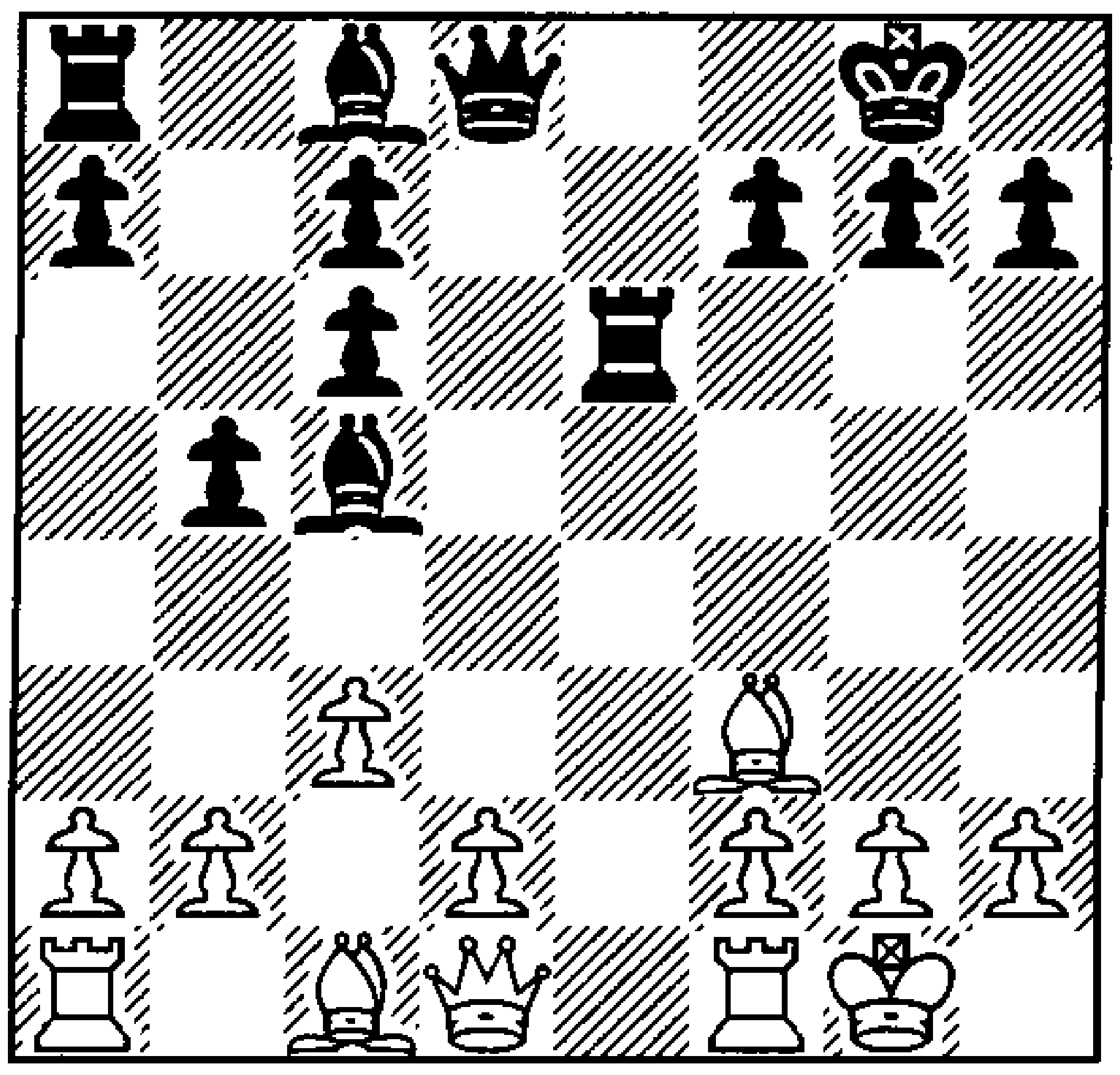


11 ♗f3

According to Steinitz, 11 c3 is better, when 11...♕h4 is acceptable, for example: 12 d4 ♗d6 13 g3 ♕h3 (threatening ...♖h4) 14 f4 ♗d7 15 ♗f3 ♖e7 (and ...♖ae8), or 12 g3 ♕e7! (inferior is 12...♕h3 13 d3! ♖e8 14 ♗f3 ♗d7 15 a4) 13 ♗f3 ♗h3 14 d4 ♗xf1 15 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 16 ♕xf1 ♗d6 with a comfortable game.

11...♖e6 12 c3?

A simply hideous move: who would think of allowing the queen in at d3? Especially since 12 d3 retains a normal position.



12...♕d3!

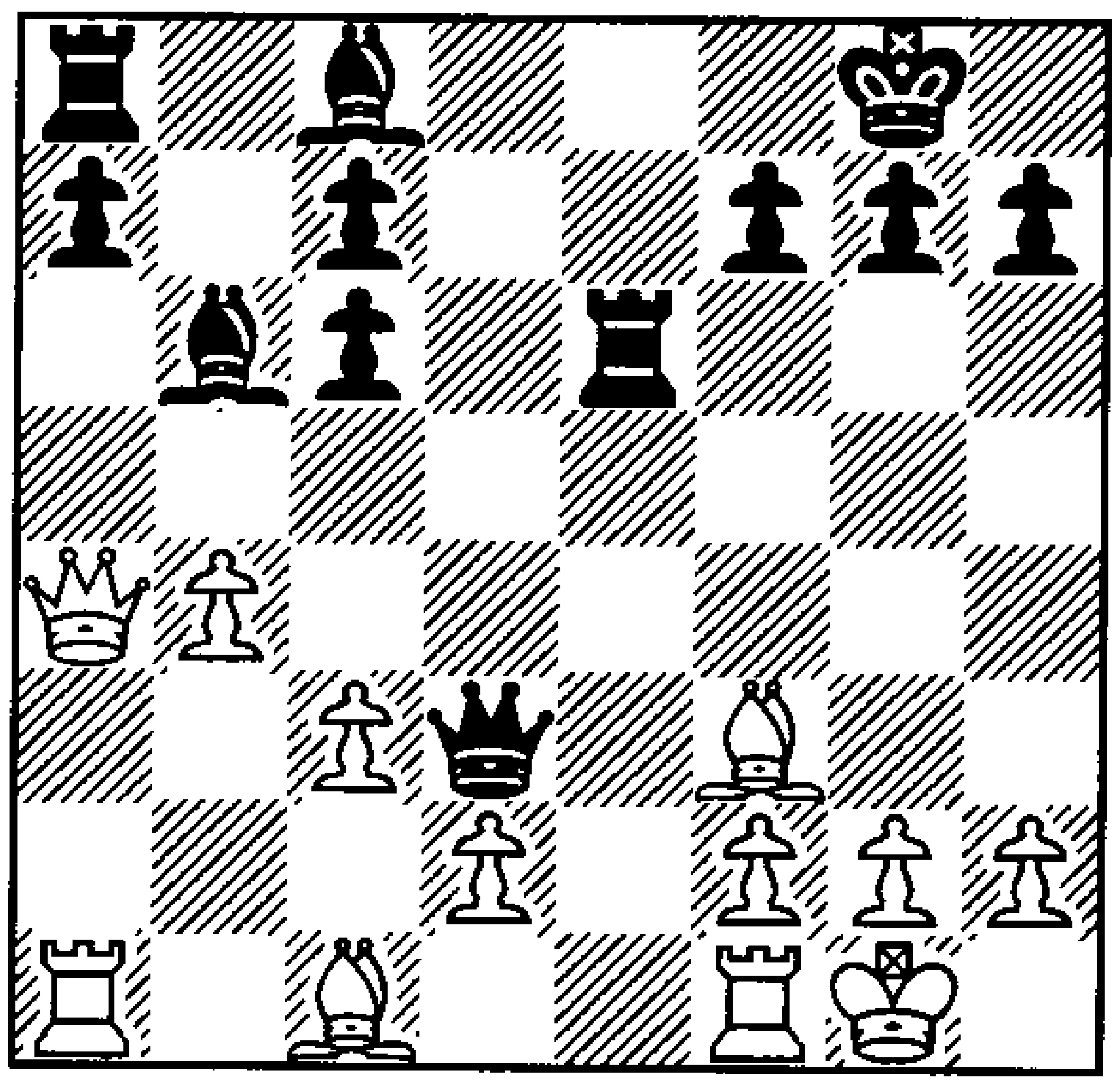
Of course: the queen completely paralyses

White's position.

13 b4?!

This is also dubious. 13 ♖e1 ♖xe1+ 14 ♕xe1 looks better, although after 14...♗f5! (14...♗d7 15 ♕f1) 15 ♗xc6 (15 ♕e2 ♖d8!) 15...♖d8 16 ♕e5 ♕c2! (16...♗d6? 17 ♕xb5 ♕c2 18 ♕a4) 17 ♗f3 ♗d6 18 ♕xb5 ♗d3 19 ♕c6 ♔f8! Black still has the advantage.

13...♗b6 14 a4 bxa4 15 ♕xa4



15...♗d7?

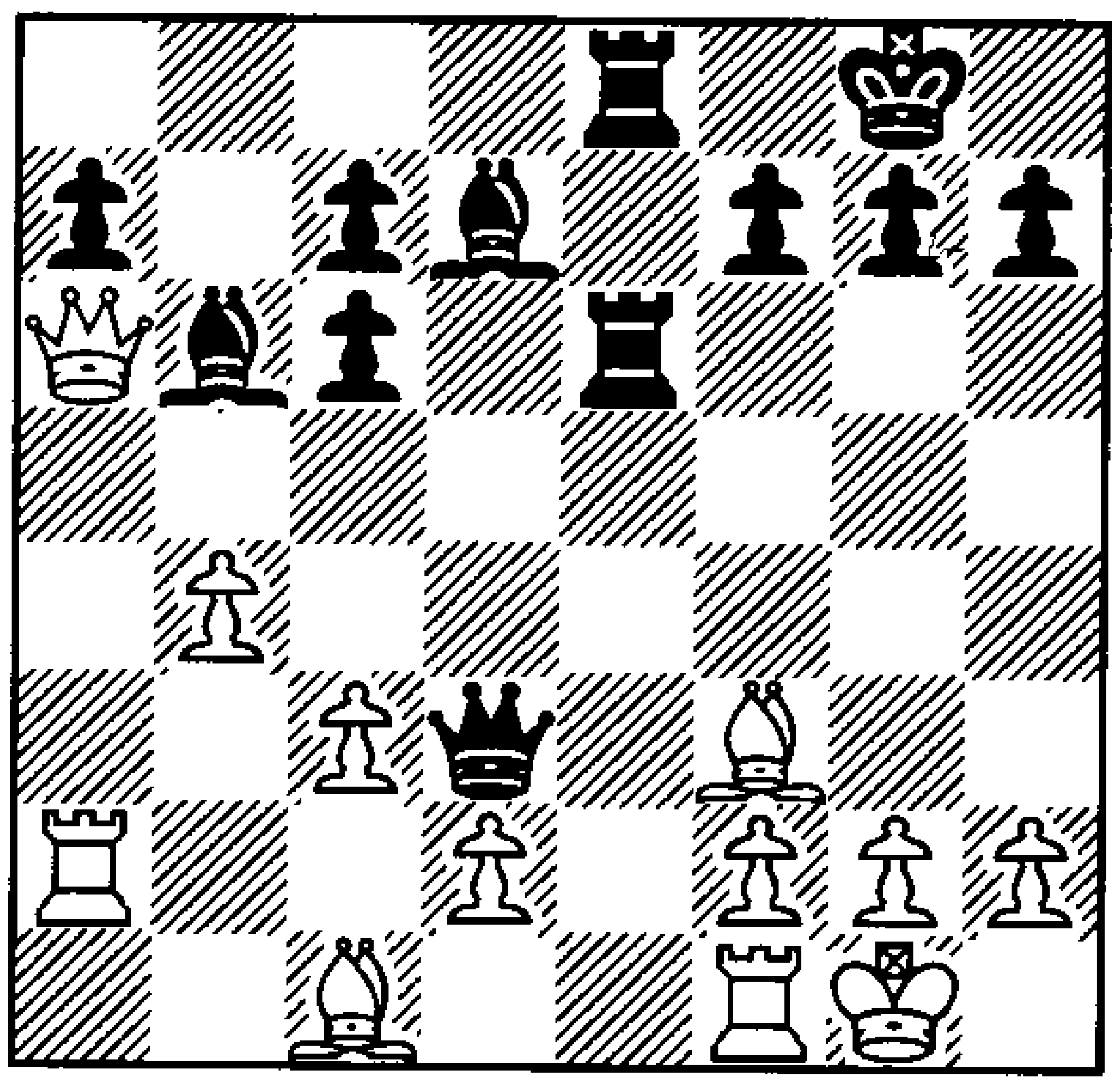
A mistake in reply. Black could have won by 15...♗b7! (maintaining control of a6) 16 ♖a2 ♖ae8 17 ♕d1 ♗a6! 18 ♖xa6 ♕xa6 19 d4 ♕c4 20 ♗d2 a5.

16 ♖a2?

A fatal error. The queen should have been dislodged from d3 by 16 ♕a6!, when the advantage could have passed to White: 16...♕xa6?! 17 ♖xa6 ♖ae8 18 ♗g4 (but not 18 d4? c5! 19 bxc5 ♗b5) 18...♗c8 (18...♖6e7?! 19 ♗xd7 ♖xd7 20 d4) 19 ♖a1 ♖f6 20 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 21 d4, or 16...♕f5 (inferior is 16...♕g6?! 17 d4 ♖ae8 18 ♗f4) 17 d4 ♖ae8 18 ♗e3 c5 19 bxc5 ♗xc5 20 ♕b7 (not 20 ♕a5? ♖g6 21 ♔h1 ♕xf3 22 gxf3 ♗c6 and wins; whereas 20 ♕e2 ♗b6 21 ♗g4 ♖xe3 22 ♗xf5 ♖xe2 23 ♗xd7 is level) 20...♗b6 21 c4. Instead of winning, Black would have had to defend...

16...♖ae8 (with the threat of ...♕xf1+) **17 ♕a6**

Also hopeless is 17 ♕d1 c5 (17...♖e5!? Neishtadt) 18 bxc5 ♗xc5 19 ♗a3 (19 ♗g4 f5) 19...♗xa3 20 ♖xa3 ♗b5. Paulsen found the correct idea after all, but for some reason a move later. At that time tempo play was still unusual!



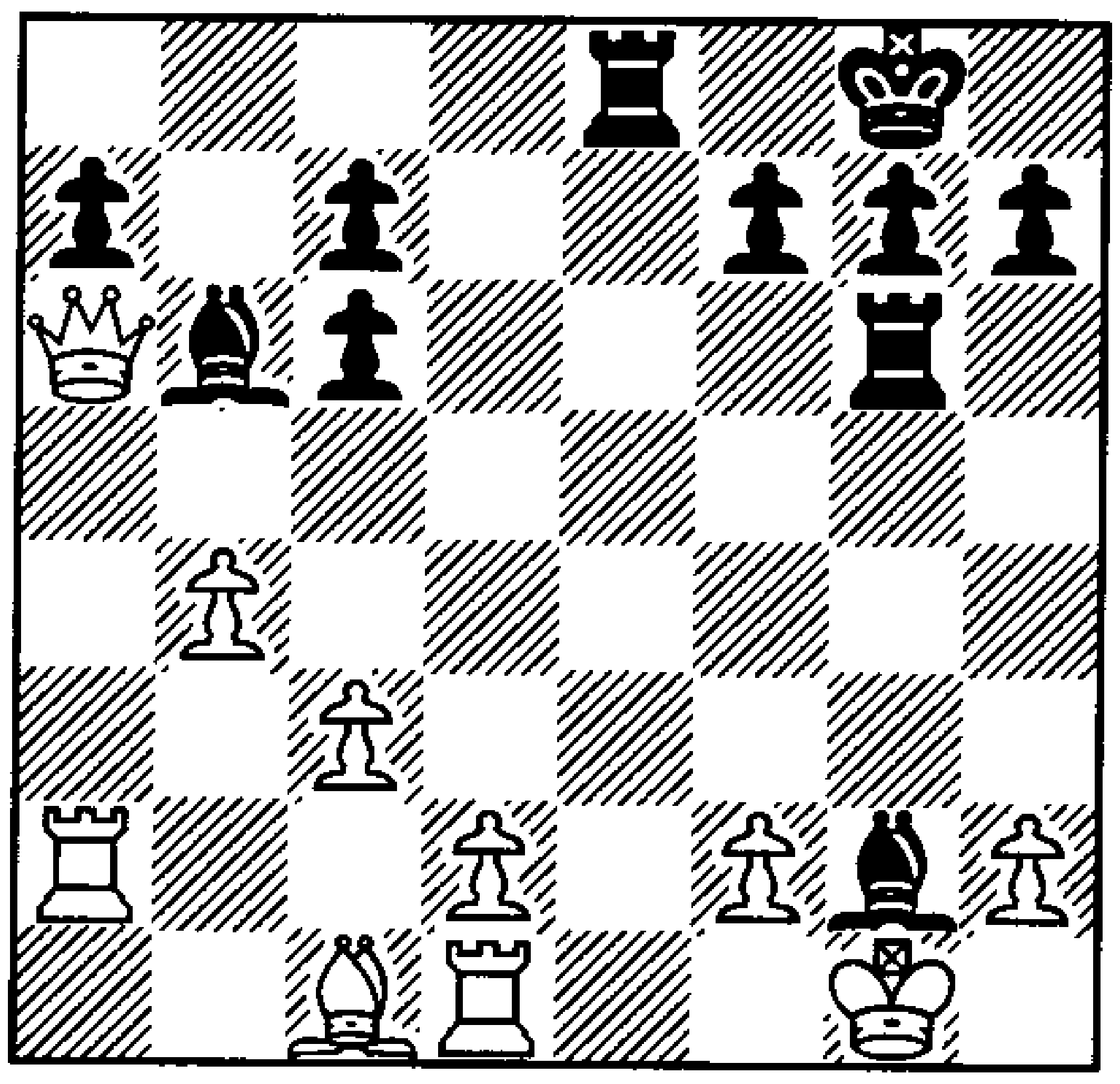
17...♕xf3!!

A very pretty refutation.

18 gxf3 ♖g6+ 19 ♔h1 ♗h3 20 ♖d1

Or 20 ♕d3 (20 ♖g1? ♖xg1+ 21 ♔xg1 ♖e1+) 20...f5! 21 ♖d1 (21 ♕c4+ ♔f8!) 21...♗g2+ 22 ♔g1 ♗xf3+ 23 ♔f1 ♗xd1 and wins.

20...♗g2+ 21 ♔g1 ♗xf3+ 22 ♔f1 ♗g2+ (the 'quiet' 22...♖g2! would have won more quickly: 23 ♕d3 ♖xf2+ 24 ♔g1 ♖g2+ 25 ♔h1 ♖g1 mate – Zukertort) **23 ♔g1**



23...♗h3+ (Black could have mated by 23...♗e4+ 24 ♔f1 ♗f5! 25 ♕e2 ♗h3+ 26 ♔e1 ♖g1 – Bauer) **24 ♔h1 ♗xf2 25 ♕f1 ♗xf1 26 ♖xf1 ♖e2 27 ♖a1 ♖h6 28 d4 ♗e3 0-1**

On becoming USA champion, for a time

Morphy settled in New York, where he played 161 games at odds (+107 -36 =18) and 100 on equal terms (+87 -5 =8), in which his opponents included the strongest players of that time, such as Paulsen, Stanley, Lichtenhein and Schulten. One of his wins over the latter was published all over the world.

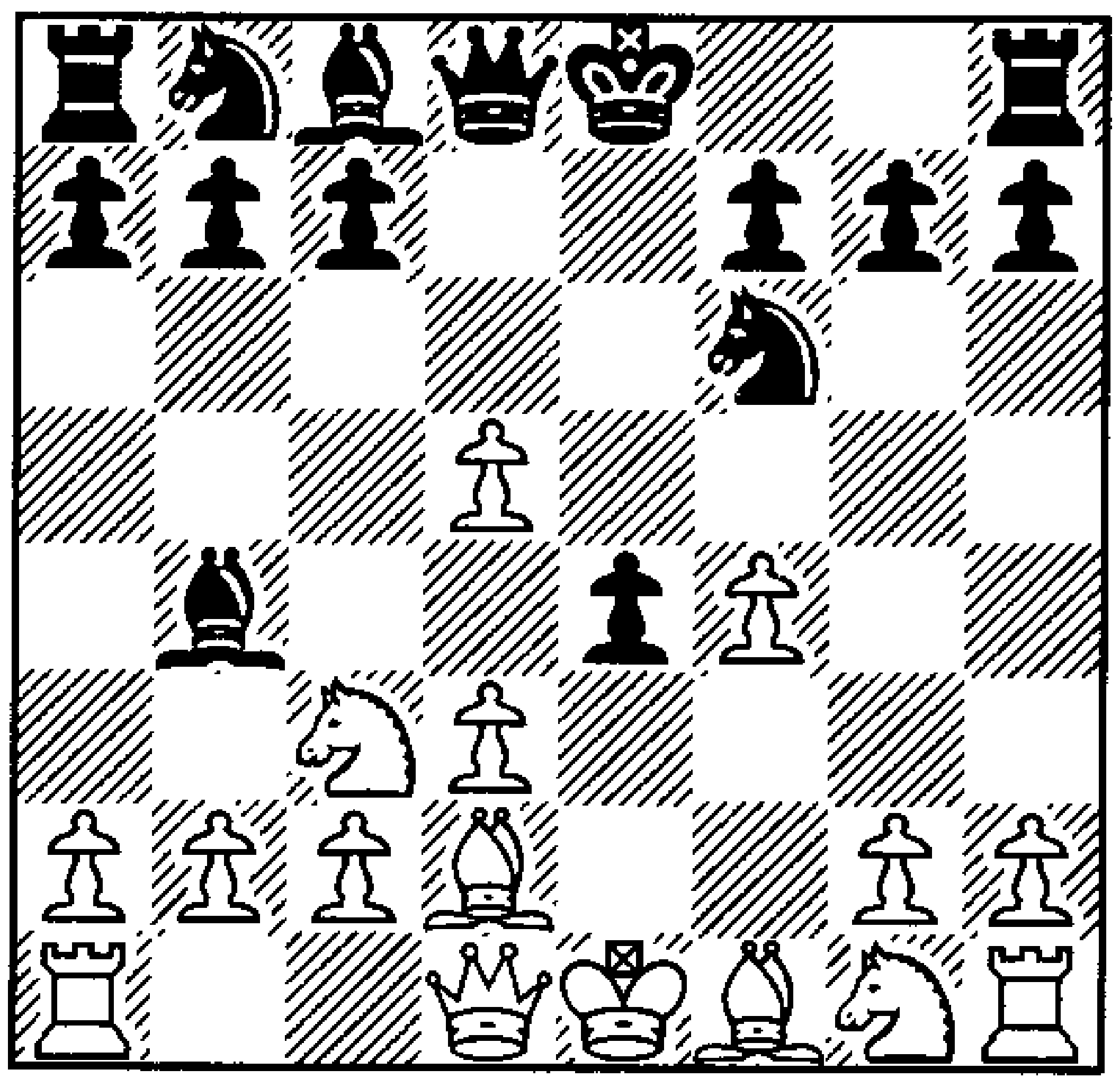
Game 7
J.Schulten-P.Morphy
New York 1857
King's Gambit C32

1 e4 e5 2 f4 d5 3 exd5 e4 (the Falkbeer Counter-Gambit, the evaluation of which remains not altogether clear even to this day) **4 ♘c3**

More is promised by 4 d3 ♘f6 (4...♕xd5 5 ♕e2, or, as suggested by Keres, 5 ♘d2!? exd3 6 ♗xd3) 5 dxe4 ♘xe4 6 ♘f3 ♗c5 7 ♕e2 ♗f5 8 ♘c3 ♕e7 9 ♗e3!

4...♘f6 5 d3 ♗b4 6 ♗d2

After 6 dxe4 ♘xe4 7 ♕d4 ♕e7 Black has a comfortable game: 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 ♗d2 ♘xd2 10 ♕xd2 c6! (10...♗g4 has also been played) 11 ♘f3 (11 dxc6?! ♖d8 12 ♕c1 ♘xc6; 11 0-0-0 cxd5 12 ♗f3 ♗e6 and ...♘c6) 11...cxd5 12 0-0 ♘c6 (Bardeleben-Blackburne, London 1895).



6...e3!?

'Entirely in Morphy's style! We have here a splendid example of a *positional* sacrifice.' (Euwe) Later they began making this move automatically, occasionally also trying 6...exd3 7 ♗xd3 0-0. But in the game Spassky-Bronstein (Moscow 1971) Black preferred 6...0-0 and after 7 ♘xe4 ♖e8 8 ♗xb4 ♘xe4 9 dxe4 ♖xe4+ 10 ♗e2 ♖xb4 (a variation by Falkbeer!) 11 ♘f3 ♖xf4 12 ♕d2 ♕d6 13 0-0-0 ♘d7 14 ♘d4 a6 15 g3 ♖f6 16 ♖he1 ♘e5 17 ♗h5 ♗d7 18 ♕e2 ♖e8 he gained a draw. Apparently, after 6...e3, without going into details, Spassky was intending somewhere to improve on Schulten's play...

7 ♗xe3 0-0 8 ♗d2

No better is 8 ♗e2 ♗xc3+ 9 bxc3 ♘xd5 10 ♗d2 ♕f6!, or 8 ♘e2 ♖e8 9 ♗d2 ♗xc3 10 ♗xc3 ♘xd5 (Schulten-Kolisch, Paris 1860).

8...♗xc3

Eliminating the knight, which in some cases could have covered the e-file. For example: 8...♘xd5 9 ♘xd5 ♖e8+ 10 ♘e3 (10 ♗e2!?) 10...♖xe3+ 11 ♔f2, or 8...♖e8+ 9 ♗e2 (inferior is 9 ♘ce2?! ♗c5, when 10 c4? ♘g4 11 ♘h3 ♕h4+ 12 g3 ♘xh2! is not possible, while after 10 ♘f3 ♕xd5 Black is alright) 9...♗g4 10 ♘e4! with advantage.

9 bxc3 ♖e8+

Later there occurred 9...♘xd5 10 ♕f3 (10 ♘f3 ♕f6!) 10...♖e8+ 11 ♘e2 ♘c6 with double-edged play, although more active is 10 c4! ♖e8+ 11 ♗e2 ♘e3 (11...♘f6 12 ♘f3 ♕e7 13 ♘e5 ♘c6 14 ♗c3! Estrin) 12 ♗xe3 ♖xe3 13 ♔f2! ♖e8 (incorrect is 13...♕d4? 14 ♘f3 ♕xf4 15 ♕c1 Petroff-Schumoff, St Petersburg 1862) 14 ♘f3, and Black still has to find real compensation for the pawn (for example, 14...♗g4 15 ♕d2 ♗xf3 16 ♗xf3 ♕d4+ 17 ♔g3! etc.).

10 ♗e2 ♗g4

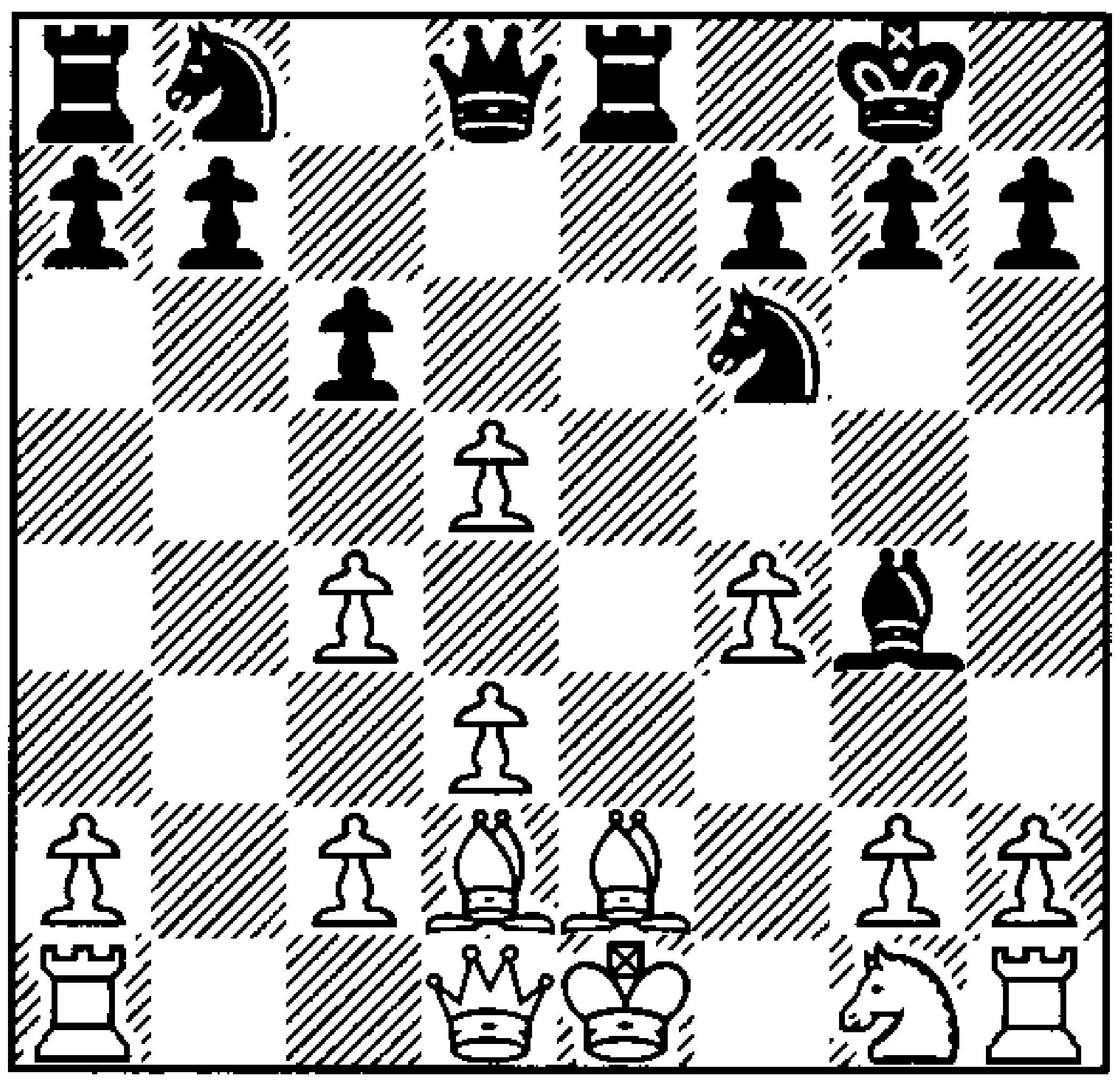
Since Morphy won quickly, one does not feel inclined to criticise this move. Especially since after 10...♘xd5 11 c4!, as it follows from the previous note, it is not obvious that Black can equalise.

11 c4?!

'This "greedy" move is the decisive (*? – G. K.*) mistake. White could have escaped from the pin, firstly, by 11 h3 ♗xe2 12 ♘xe2 ♕e7 (12...♘xd5 13 0-0) 13 ♔f2 *(in my opinion, 13* *c4!? c6 14 dxc6 ♘xc6 15 ♔f2 ♕c5+ 16 ♔g3 ♖e6 17 ♔h2 ♖ae8 18 ♘g3 is more promising – G. K.)* 13...♘xd5 14 ♖e1 ♘e3 15 ♕c1. Secondly, there was also the more useful move 11 ♔f2, after which it is not easy for Black to demonstrate that his initiative is worth the sacrificed pawn.' (Neishtadt)

According to Estrin, however, after 11 h3 stronger is 11...♕xd5! 12 ♔f2 (12 hxg4? ♕xg2) 12...♗xe2 13 ♘xe2 ♕c5+! 'with the initiative for Black' (although the position after 14 ♔g3 is by no means so clear), whereas perhaps 11 ♔f2 is indeed useful: 11...♗xe2 12 ♘xe2 ♕xd5 13 ♖f1 (13 ♖e1 ♘c6 14 ♔g1 ♕c5+! 15 d4 ♕d5 is equal) 13...♘c6 (13...♕c5+ 14 ♔g3 ♕h5 15 ♘d4; 13...♘g4+!?) 14 ♔g1 ♕c5+ 15 ♔h1 ♘g4 16 ♘d4 with a slight advantage.

11...c6!

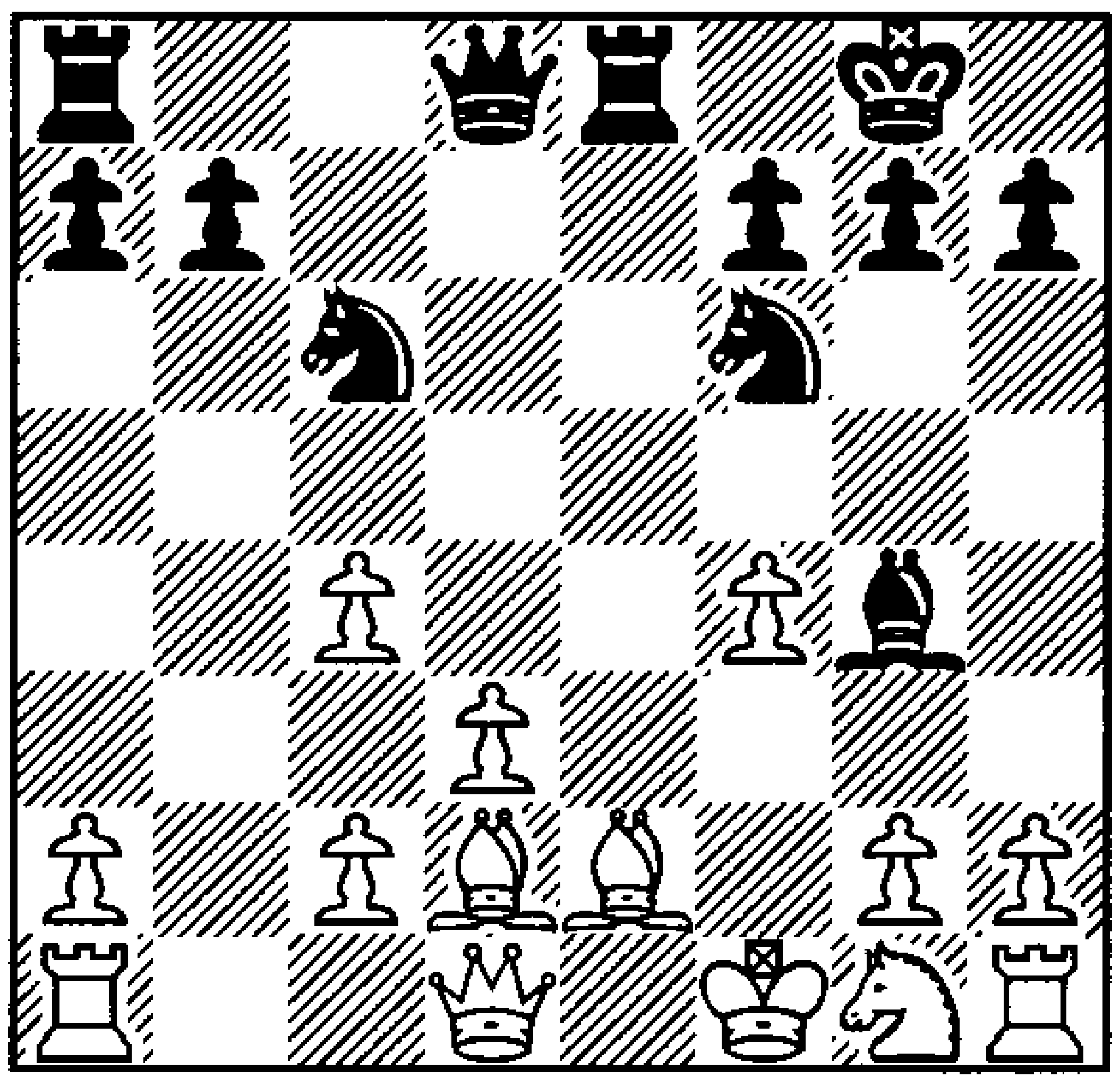


12 dxc6??

But this really is the decisive mistake, the move of roughly a third category player. Absolutely essential was 12 h3 ♗xe2 13 ♘xe2 cxd5 14 cxd5 ♕xd5 15 0-0 with an extra pawn, for which Black has some compensation, but not more. Now, however, he has an enormous lead in development and an irresistible attack.

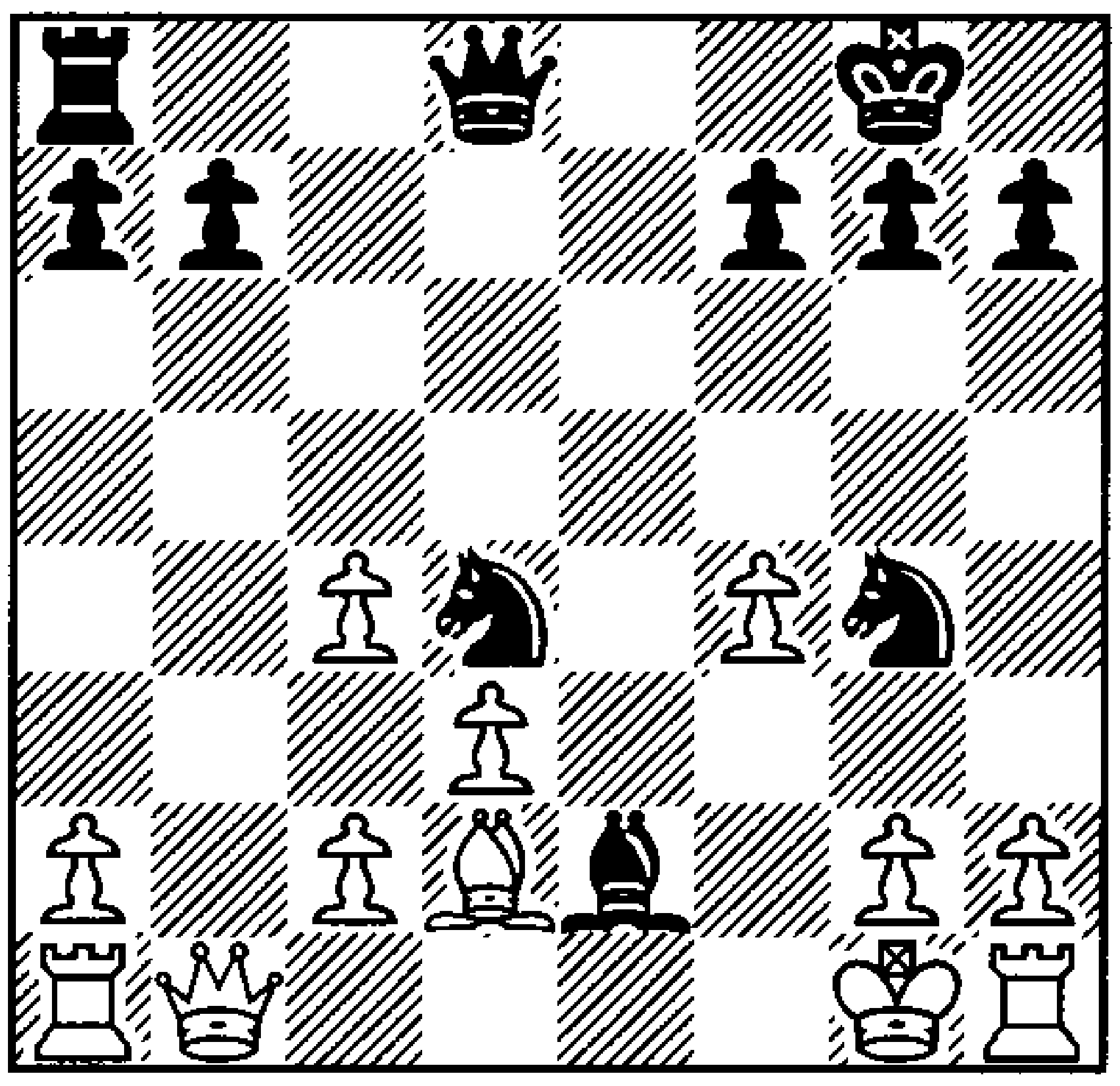
12...♘xc6 (with the threat of ...♘d4) **13 ♔f1**

White would no longer have saved the game by 13 h3 ♗xe2 14 ♘xe2 ♘d4, or 13 ♗c3 ♘d4 14 ♗xd4 ♕xd4 15 ♘f3 ♗xf3 16 gxf3 ♘h5, or 13 ♔f2 ♕b6+ (but not 13...♖xe2+? 14 ♘xe2 ♘d4 15 ♖e1) 14 ♔g3 ♖xe2 15 ♘xe2 ♘d4.



13...♖xe2! (disaster strikes on e2) **14 ♘xe2 ♘d4 15 ♕b1 ♗xe2+ 16 ♔f2** (16 ♔g1 ♘xc2 and 16 ♔e1 ♕e7 are equally hopeless) **16...♘g4+ 17 ♔g1**

If 17 ♔e1 (17 ♔g3 ♘f5+ and ...♕h4 mate), then 17...♕h4+ 18 g3 ♕e7 or 18...♖e8!



17...♘f3+! (forcing mate in seven moves) **18 gxf3 ♕d4+ 19 ♔g2 ♕f2+ 20 ♔h3 ♕xf3+ 21 ♔h4**

Here Black announced mate in three: 21...♘e3 22 ♖g1 ♘f5+ 23 ♔g5 ♕h5 mate.

Morphy dreamed of playing the chess king of the 1840s – Staunton, and his friends sent the latter an invitation to visit America. But Staunton declined, and then Morphy himself set off for Europe. In June 1858 he arrived in

England, where he easily demonstrated his superiority over the local masters, brilliantly winning a match against Löwenthal (spending the prize on... furniture for the flat of his hard-up opponent!), but, alas, after lengthy discussions he did not achieve his main aim – a match with the 48-year-old English champion.

The explanation is obvious – here we can again recall the words of Fischer: 'Staunton appears to have been afraid to meet Morphy and I think his fears were well-founded. Morphy would have beaten him, but it wouldn't have been the one-sided encounter that many writers now think it would. It would have been a great struggle.'

The others were crushed one after another by the young American, and in highly spectacular style.

Game 8

H.Bird-P.Morphy

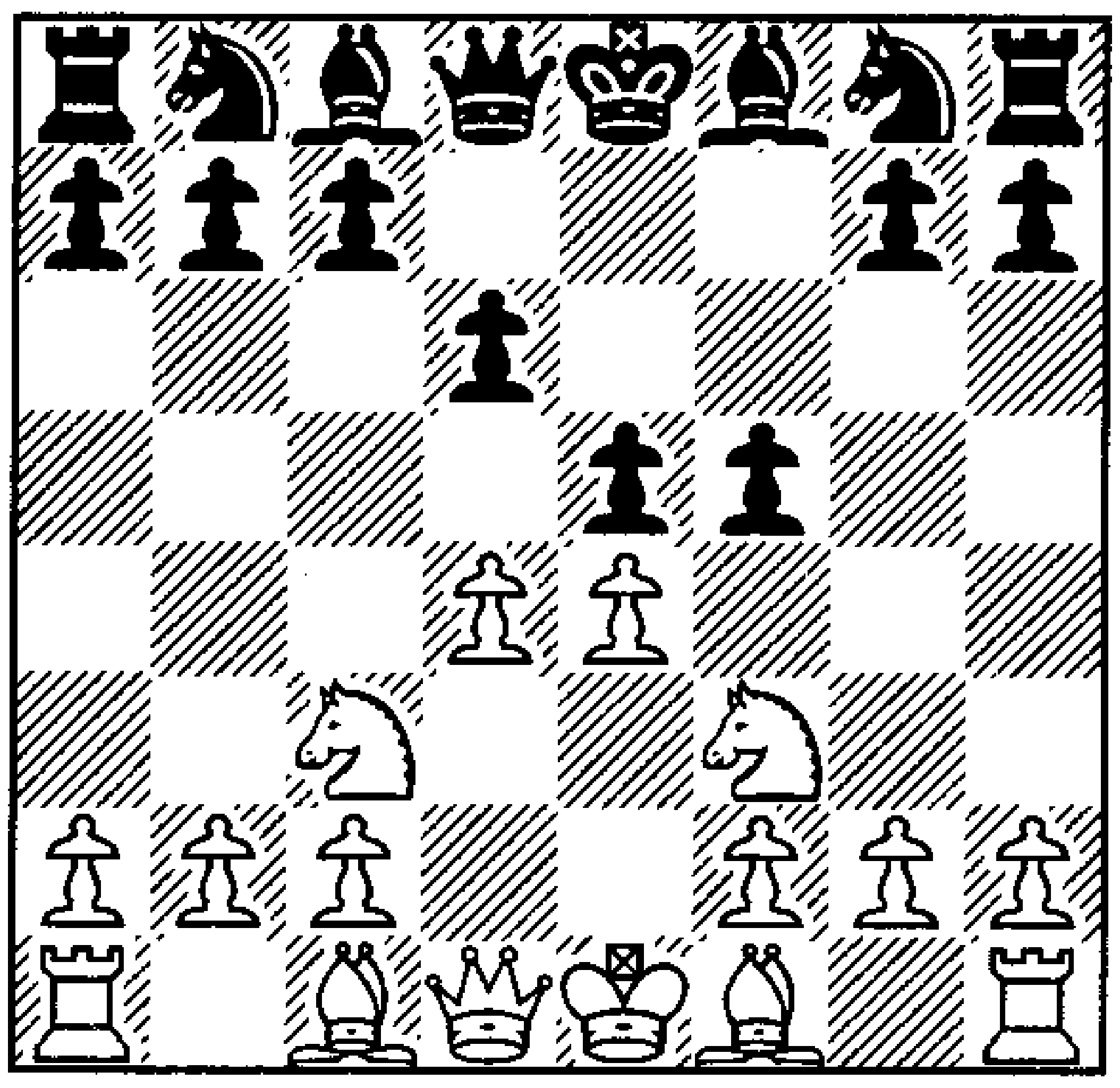
London 1858

Philidor Defence C41

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 f5?!

Philidor's move, which was fashionable at that time, but which is objectively more than dubious, and perhaps even losing.

4 ♘c3



Also good is 4 ♗c4, as well as 4 dxe5 fxe4 5 ♘g5 d5 6 e6 (6 ♘c3!?) 6...♗c5 7 ♘c3! (but not immediately 7 ♘f7? ♕f6 8 ♗e3 d4 with a counterattack, Barnes-Morphy, London 1858) 7...c6 (7...♕f6 8 ♘gxe4 dxe4 9 ♕h5+ and ♕xc5) 8 ♘f7, which was suggested back in 1880 by Johann Berger.

4...fxe4

Black fails to equalise with either 4...♘f6 5 dxe5 ♘xe4 6 ♘xe4 fxe4 7 ♘g5 d5 8 e6 ♗c5 9 ♘xe4 ♗e7 10 ♕h5+ g6 11 ♕e5 ♖g8 12 ♘g5, or 4...exd4 5 ♕xd4 fxe4 6 ♗g5 ♘f6 7 ♘xe4 ♗e7 8 ♗c4 ♘c6 9 ♕e3.

5 ♘xe4 d5

Or 5...♘f6 6 ♘xf6+ gxf6 (if 6...♕xf6, then 7 ♗g5 ♕g6 8 dxe5 Zukertort) 7 dxe5 fxe5 8 ♗c4 ♕f6 9 ♘g5 with an obvious advantage.

6 ♘g3?!

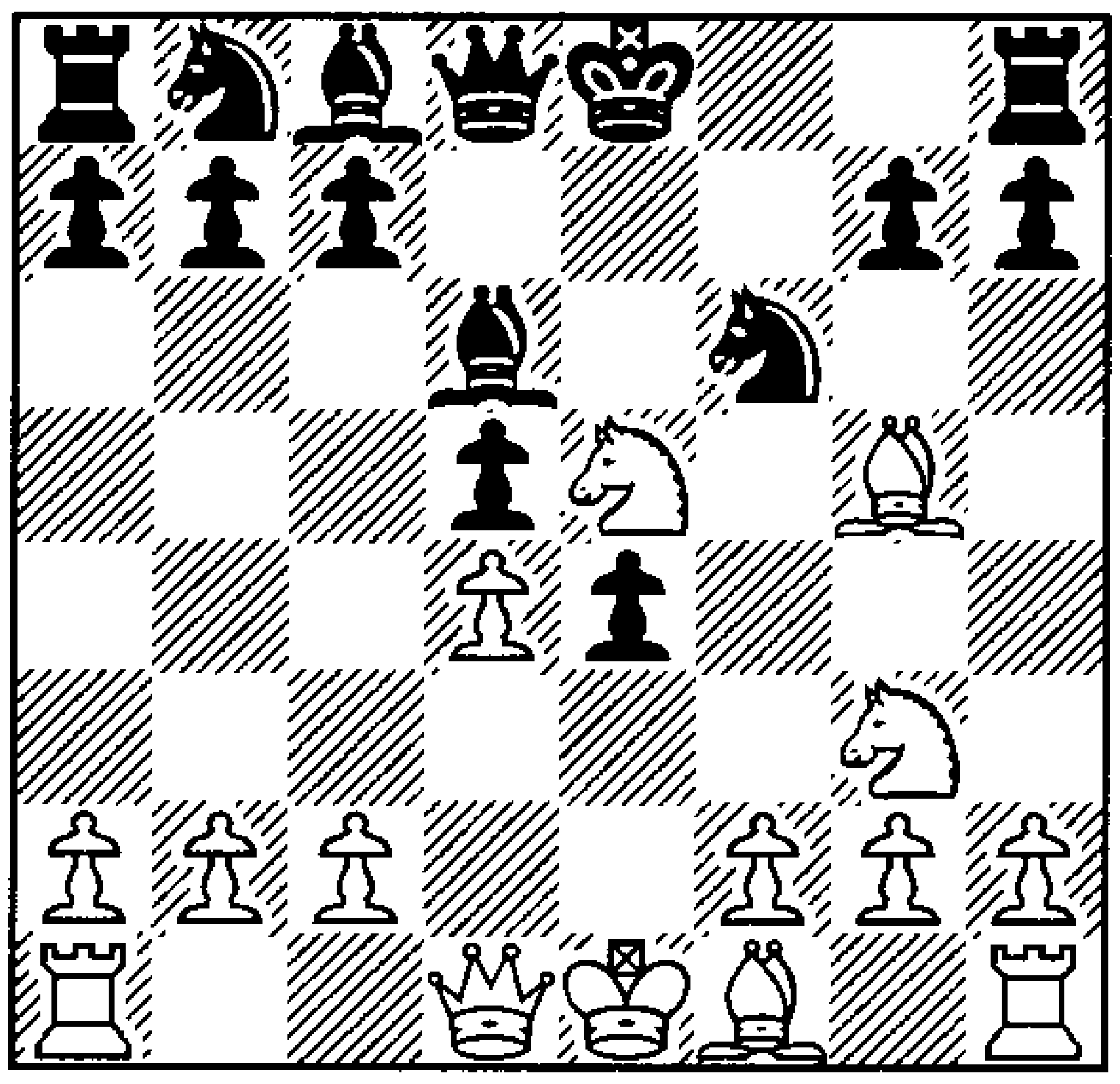
As was shown by Zukertort, stronger is 6 ♘xe5! dxe4 7 ♕h5+ g6 8 ♘xg6 ♘f6 9 ♕e5+ ♗e7 10 ♘xh8 ♘c6 11 ♗b5 ♕d5 12 ♗g5. And in the event of 9...♔f7 10 ♗c4+ ♔g7 (10...♔xg6?? 11 ♕g5 mate) 11 ♗h6+ ♔xh6 12 ♘xh8 ♗b4+ 13 c3 ♕xh8 14 cxb4 (Keres), White's advantage is close to being decisive.

6...e4 7 ♘e5 ♘f6 8 ♗g5?!

Correct is 8 f3!, advantageously undermining the centre.

8...♗d6

'A move typical of Morphy, striving as soon as possible to overcome his lack of development.' (Euwe) In Maróczy's opinion, 8...♗e7 was more circumspect.



9 ♘h5?! 0-0 10 ♕d2?! ♕e8! 11 g4?

After a series of incomprehensible moves, Bird commits a decisive mistake. 'However, had it not been for this move, chess literature would not have been enriched with one of Morphy's most staggering and profound combinations... After 11 ♘xf6+! (11 ♗xf6 ♕xh5) 11...gxf6 12 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 (12...♕h5 13 g4) 13 ♕g5+ ♖g6 14 ♘xg6 hxg6! 15 ♕xd5+ (or 15 h4) the game would have become equal.' (Maróczy) Euwe does not agree with this evaluation: 'In the resulting open position the strength of the two black bishops should quickly tell.' But in my opinion, White would have been lucky to reach such a position, since in fact he is destroyed by the interposition of 12...e3! (this Morphy would not have missed!) 13 ♕xe3 ♖xf6 14 0-0-0 (14 ♕g5+ ♖g6) 14...♗f8 etc.

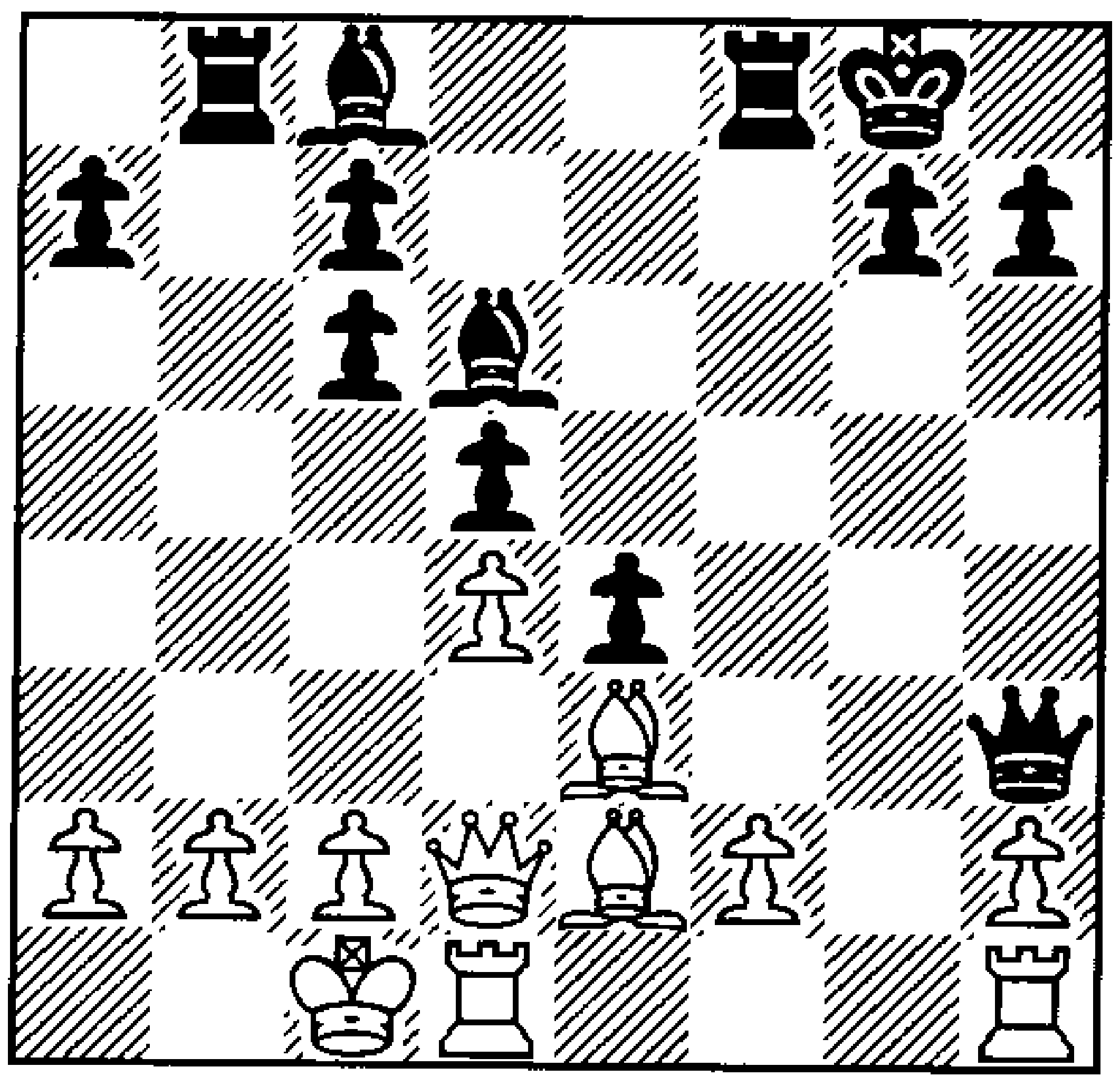
Bird's mistake is fully understandable: he already had a difficult choice...

11...♘xg4 12 ♘xg4 ♕xh5 13 ♘e5 ♘c6 14 ♗e2 ♕h3 15 ♘xc6 bxc6 16 ♗e3 ♖b8

The prelude to a combination, although the immediate 16...♗g4 was more efficient, when Black is a very healthy pawn to the good.

17 0-0-0

'Safer is 17 c3,' (Maróczy) if one can say this about a hopeless position.



17...♖xf2?!

I raise my hat to the great chess artist, but the crude 17...♗g4! was correct, or even, according to Euwe, the slow 17...♗f5 and ...♗g6.

18 ♗xf2 ♕a3!!

But not 18...♗a3? 19 ♕e3! Alas, even this brilliant queen manoeuvre does not give more than a draw...

19 c3!

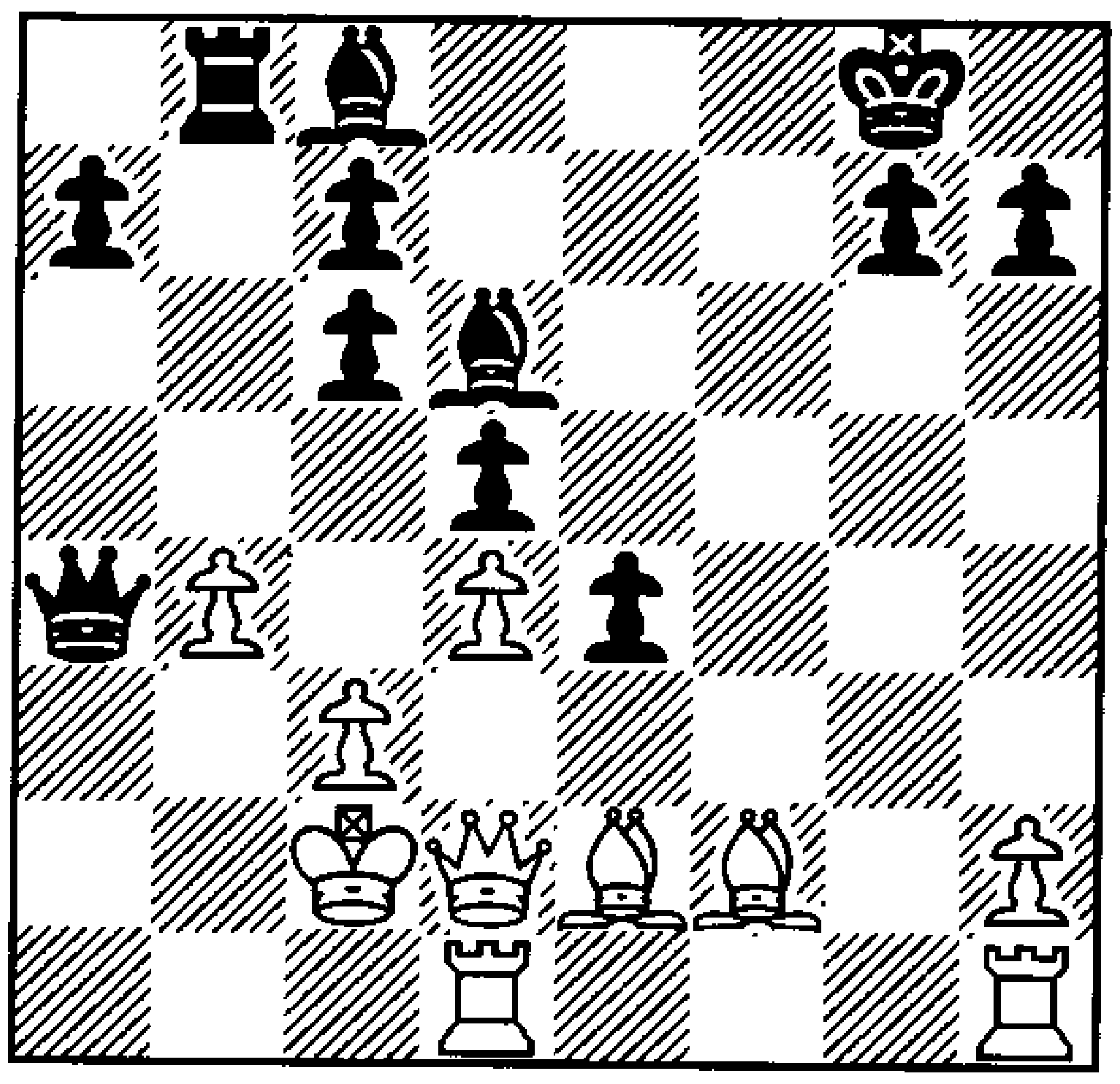
If 19 ♕g5 Maróczy gives the winning variation 19...♕xb2+ 20 ♔d2 ♗b4+ 21 ♔e3 ♕a3+! 22 ♗d3 (22 ♔f4? ♗d6+) 22...♗a6 23 ♖hg1 ♗f8! and ...exd3, while if 19 ♕c3 – 19...♕xa2 20 ♖dg1 g6 21 b3 ♗b4! Instead of 19...♕xa2 even stronger is 19...♗f4+! 20 ♖d2 ♕xa2 21 ♕a3 ♕xa3 22 bxa3 e3 and wins (Euwe), or 21 b3 ♗d6! (simpler than 21...e3 22 ♗xe3 ♗xe3 23 ♖f1 a5! etc.) 22 ♖dd1 ♗b4 winning.

19...♕xa2

Grandmaster Murey tried to find a win after 19...e3?! 20 ♗xe3 ♗f5, but without success: 21 ♕c2! ♕xa2 22 ♗d3 ♗xd3 (22...♗a3 or 22...♖xb2 – 23 ♗xf5) 23 ♖xd3 ♗a3 (23...♖xb2 24 ♕xb2 ♗a3 25 ♕xa3!) 24 ♕b1! (24 bxa3 ♕a1+ 25 ♔d2 ♕xh1 26 c4! ♕xh2+ 27 ♔c3 will also do) 24...♗xb2+ 25 ♔c2 ♕a4+ 26 ♔d2 ♗xc3+ 27 ♖xc3 ♖xb1 28 ♖xb1 ♕a2+ 29 ♔c1, parrying the attack and retaining the extra material.

20 b4 (forced: mate in two was threatened, and if 20 ♕c2? there is a choice between 20...♗f4+ and 20...♖xb2 21 ♕xb2 ♗a3 22 ♕xa3 ♕xa3+ 23 ♔d2 ♕b2+ 24 ♔e1 ♕xc3+)

20...♕a1+ 21 ♔c2 ♕a4+



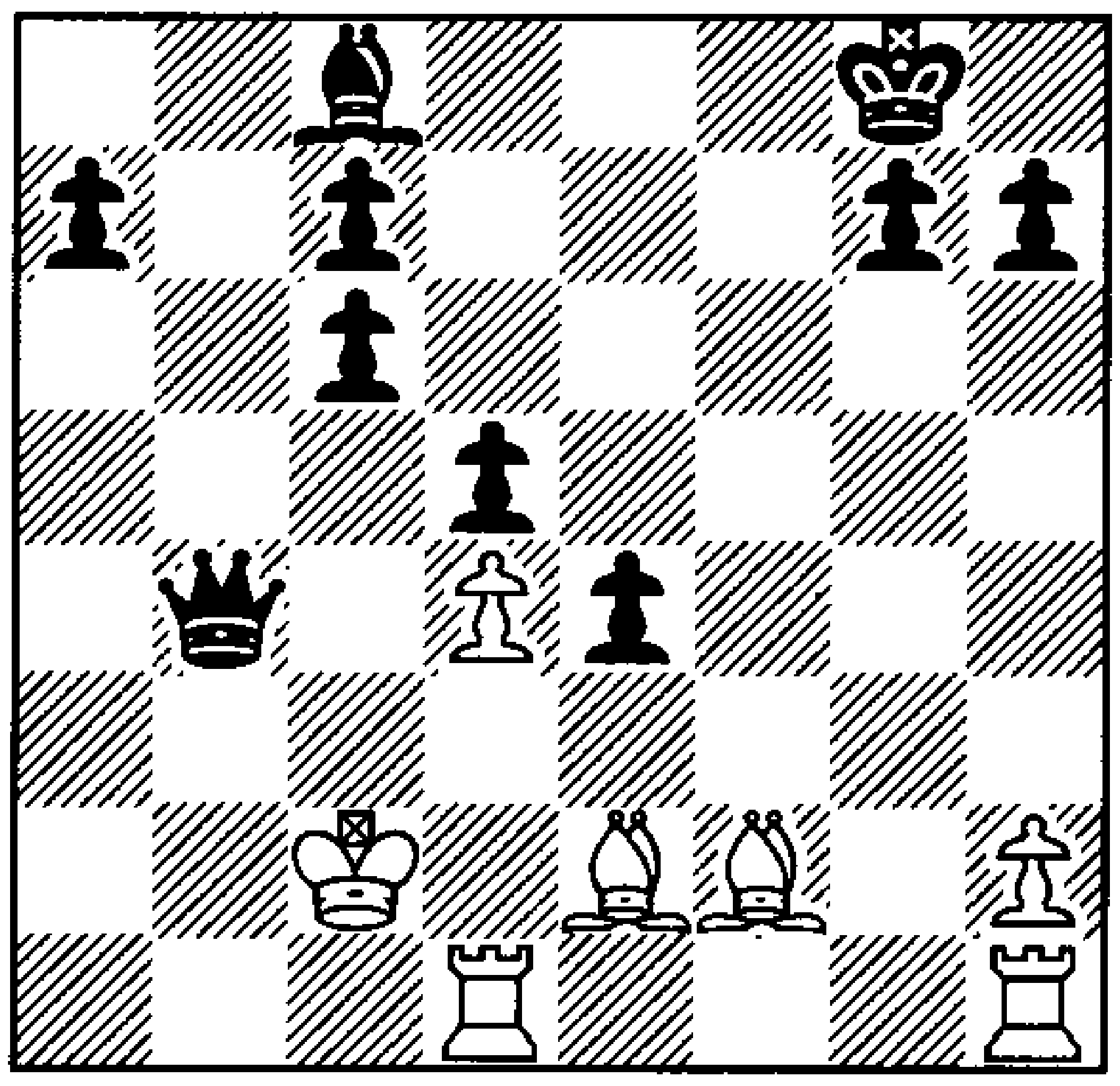
22 ♔b2?

According to Maróczy, 22 ♔c1! would have forced a draw by perpetual check (22...♕a1+), since 22...♗xb4? is wrong in view of 23 cxb4 ♖xb4 24 ♕g5 (24 ♕c2 ♕a3+ 25 ♔d2 ♖b2 26 ♖c1 is also possible) 24...♕a3+ 25 ♔d2 ♖b2+ 26 ♔e1 ♖xe2+ 27 ♔xe2 ♕f3+ 28 ♔e1 ♕xh1+ 29 ♕g1 ♕f3 30 ♕g3.

Now, with the help of a computer, it can be established that 22...♗f5! (22...a5 23 ♕c2 ♕a3+ 24 ♕b2 axb4 25 ♔c2 ♗a6 26 ♗f1! is unclear) 23 ♗e1! ♕a1+ 24 ♔c2 e3+ 25 ♔b3 exd2 26 ♖xa1 ♖e8 27 ♗a6 dxe1♕ 28 ♖axe1 ♖xe1 29 ♖xe1 ♗xh2 30 ♗b7 ♗e4 31 ♗xc6 ♔f7 would nevertheless have given Black a minimal advantage (obviously less than after 17...♗g4!: here it is far closer to a draw). This is the present-day level of attack and defence, illustrating the colossal progress in chess during the past hundred plus years.

22...♗xb4 23 cxb4 ♖xb4+ 24 ♕xb4 ♕xb4+ 25 ♔c2

If 25 ♔a2 Black wins by 25...c5! 26 dxc5 e3! 27 ♗xe3 d4.



25...e3!

This reply was overlooked by Bird – but it is hard to demand of a master from the mid-19th century that he should be able to weigh up all the consequences of 18...♕a3!! and 22...♗xb4. Whereas Morphy's sound framework and his wide-ranging tactics already resemble the play of a modern grandmaster. To combat such a hurricane was simply impossible.

26 ♗xe3 ♗f5+ 27 ♖d3 (or 27 ♗d3 ♕c4+) **27...♕c4+ 28 ♔d2 ♕a2+ 29 ♔d1 ♕b1+ 0-1**

Early in the autumn of 1858 Morphy moved on to Paris, where he won a match against the French champion Daniel Harrwitz. The winner was to be the first to win seven games, but after a string of failures Harrwitz 'fell ill' and the arbiter ruled that he had been defeated (+5 -2 =1). Curiously, Morphy considered that the event was not altogether complete and he give up his small prize to pay for the great Anderssen to travel from Breslau to Paris, if the latter wished to play a 'friendly match'. Anderssen, naturally, accepted the challenge, but informed Morphy that he would be unable to give up his teaching work in the middle of the school year and that he would arrive only for the Christmas holiday...

While he was waiting, Morphy gave some simultaneous displays (as in England, with particular success playing blindfold), and played some friendly games with the French masters, including Arnous de Rivière and Saint-Amant (his future second in the match with Anderssen), and also with some less strong – but more distinguished! – opponents. The most famous of these games was played against two consultants – the Duke of Brunswick and Count Isouard – in a box during a performance at the Opera Theatre.

Game 9

P.Morphy-Consultants

Friendly game, Paris 1858

Philidor Defence C41

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 ♗g4?

Nowadays every schoolboy knows that this is bad, but in those days it was even played by Harrwitz!

4 dxe5 ♗xf3 5 ♕xf3 dxe5 6 ♗c4 ♘f6?

The decisive mistake. True, Black had an unpleasant choice between 6...♕f6 7 ♕b3 ♗c5 (the spectacular variation 7...b6?! 8 ♘c3 ♘e7? 9 ♘b5 ♘a6 10 ♕a4 ♘c5 11 ♘d6+! ♔d8 12 ♕e8 mate was pointed out long ago in Greco's treatise!) 8 0-0 ♗b6 9 a4 a5 10 ♘c3 ♘e7 11 ♗e3 ♘d7 12 ♖ad1 and 6...♕d7 7

♕b3 followed by ♘c3, 0-0 and ♖d1 – in both cases White has an obvious advantage.

7 ♕b3 (a classic double attack) **7...♕e7**

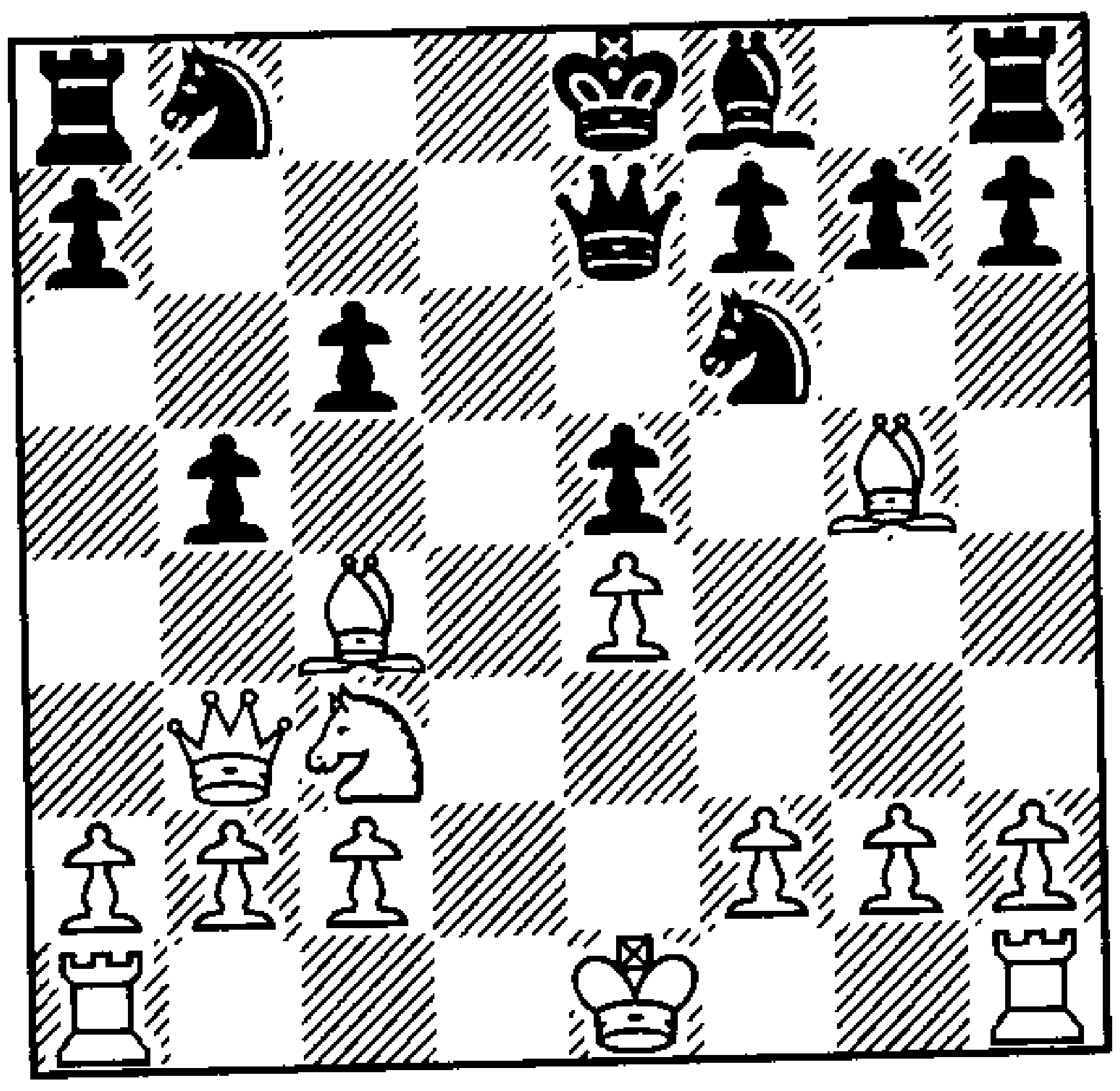
In a game played a month earlier Morphy-Harrwitz (Paris 8th matchgame 1858) Black preferred to suffer a pawn down after 7...♗d6 (7...♕d7? 8 ♕xb7) 8 ♗xf7+ and he resigned on the 59th move.

8 ♘c3!?

For the sake of rapid development Morphy avoids the exchange of queens, although after 8 ♗xf7+! (8 ♕xb7 ♕b4+ 9 ♕xb4 ♗xb4+ 10 ♗d2 is rather a 'small' achievement) 8...♔d8 (or 8...♕xf7 9 ♕xb7) 9 ♕xb7 ♕b4+ 10 ♕xb4 ♗xb4+ 11 c3 Black can resign.

8...c6 9 ♗g5 b5?

An attempt to solve all the problems in one go. 'Black would hardly have saved the game by 9...♘a6 10 ♗xa6 bxa6 11 ♕c4 or 9...h6 10 ♗xf6 gxf6 11 0-0-0, while 9...♕c7 10 0-0-0 ♗c5 would have been refuted by the simple 11 ♗xf7+! ♕xf7 12 ♖d8+.' (Neishtadt)



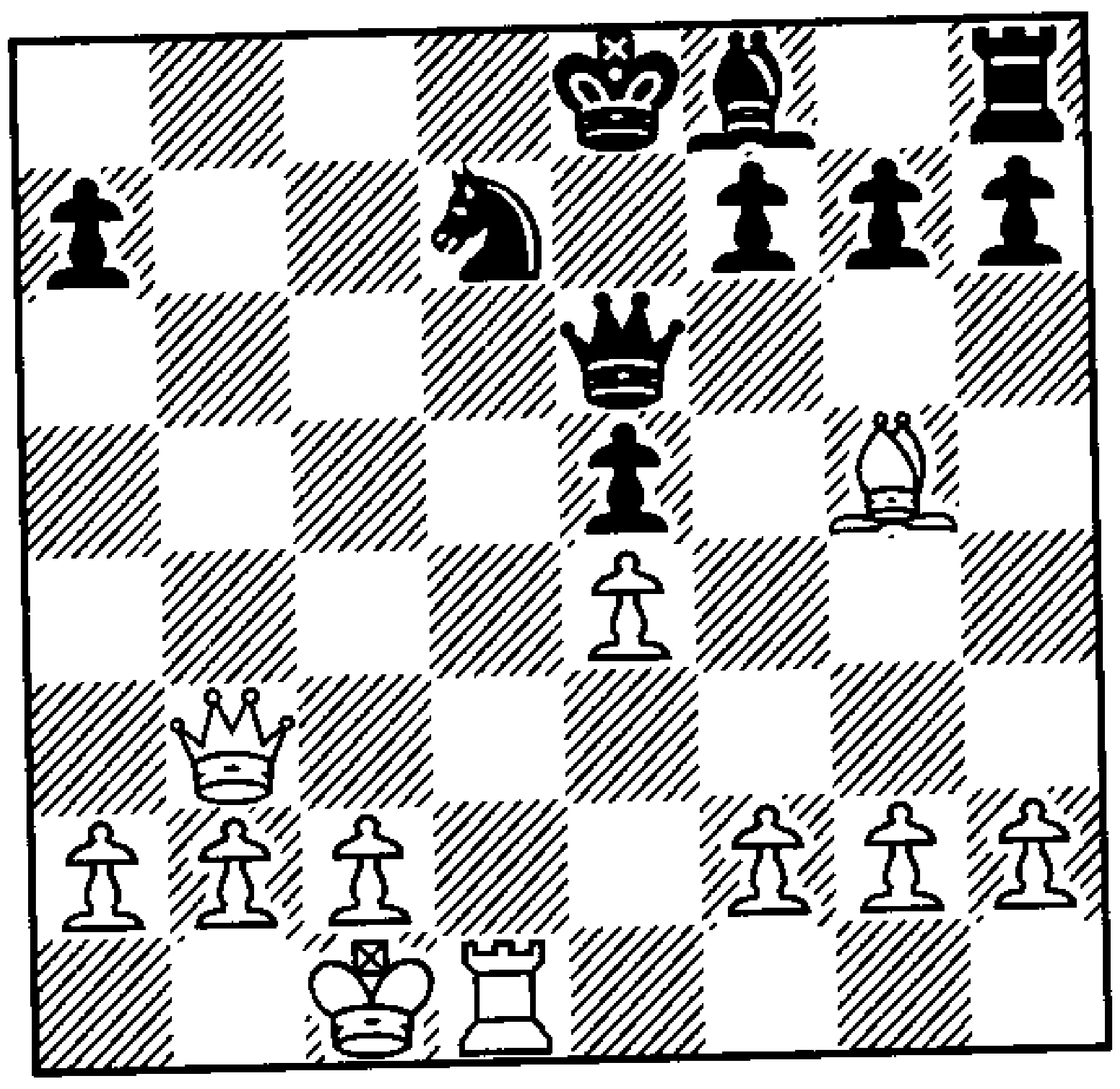
10 ♘xb5! (but not 10 ♗e2? ♕b4!) **10...cxb5 11 ♗xb5+ ♘bd7** (or 11...♔d8 12 0-0-0+) **12 0-0-0 ♖d8**

If 12...♕b4?, then 13 ♗xf6.

13 ♖xd7!

'White lands successive blows, and each time with gain of tempo.' (Euwe) 'Morphy is in his element. The brilliant combination with sacrifices makes this game one of the most beautiful achievements in the entire history of chess.' (Maróczy)

13...♖xd7 14 ♖d1 ♕e6 (14...♕b4? 15 ♗xf6) **15 ♗xd7+** (15 ♗xf6 was a drier alternative) **15...♘xd7**



16 ♕b8+!! ♘xb8 17 ♖d8 mate 'A sparkling finish!' (Euwe)

But then December came, and Anderssen arrived in Paris. They agreed to play up to seven wins, and a few days later, with Morphy hardly having managed to recover from illness, there began the historic match between the two most striking and undoubtedly the strongest players of the mid-19th century.

Again, as in his match with Harrwitz, Morphy began with a loss. But then he gained a draw and... won five games in a row! Anderssen simply no longer knew that to do: with White he despaired of playing 1 e4 and switched to his patent move 1 a3 (which he later called 'crazy'), and with the black pieces he unsuccessfully tried 1...e5, 1...d5, ...e6 and 1...c5.

Game 10

P.Morphy-A.Anderssen

Match, Paris 1858, 9th game

Sicilian Defence B44

1 e4 c5 (Anderssen, after La Bourdonnais and Staunton, was one of the pioneers of the Sicilian Defence) **2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 e6 5 ♘b5 d6**

It is hard to believe that this modern *tabiya* occurred a century and a half ago!

6 ♗f4

Fischer's favourite, but later everyone began preferring Karpov's favourite move 6 c4.

6...e5 7 ♗e3 f5?

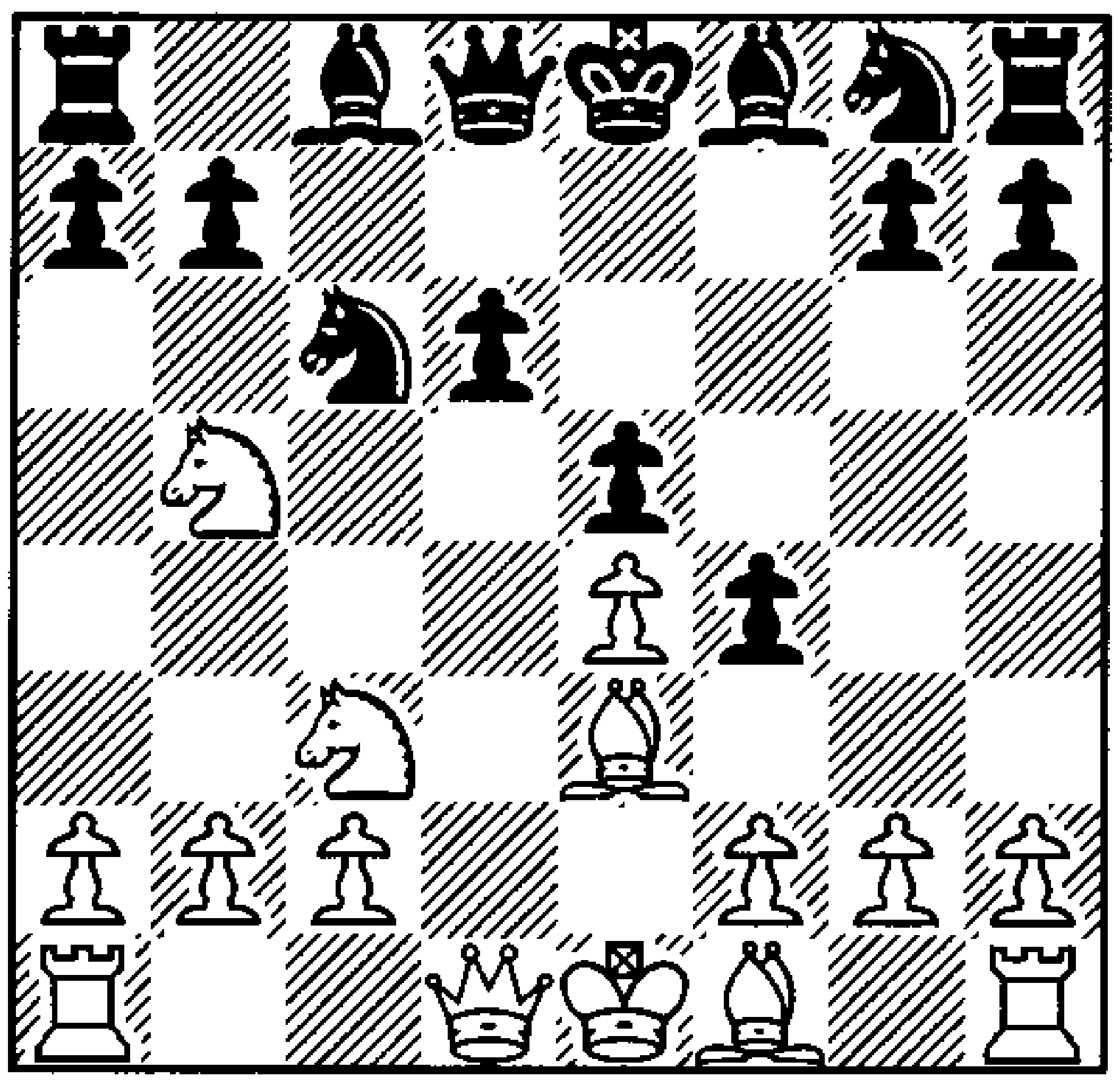
More than a hundred years were required, in order to show that after 7...♘f6 8 ♗g5 ♗e6 Black has nothing to worry about, for example: 9 ♘1c3 a6 10 ♗xf6 gxf6 11 ♘a3 d5! etc. (Fischer-Petrosian, Buenos Aires 1st match-game 1971). However, Anderssen with his aggressive style wanted to hasten a crisis in the centre: previously such methods had always worked for him.

8 ♘1c3!

Morphy sensed that chess logic was on his side, and he found an immediate refutation of Black's premature activity.

8...f4

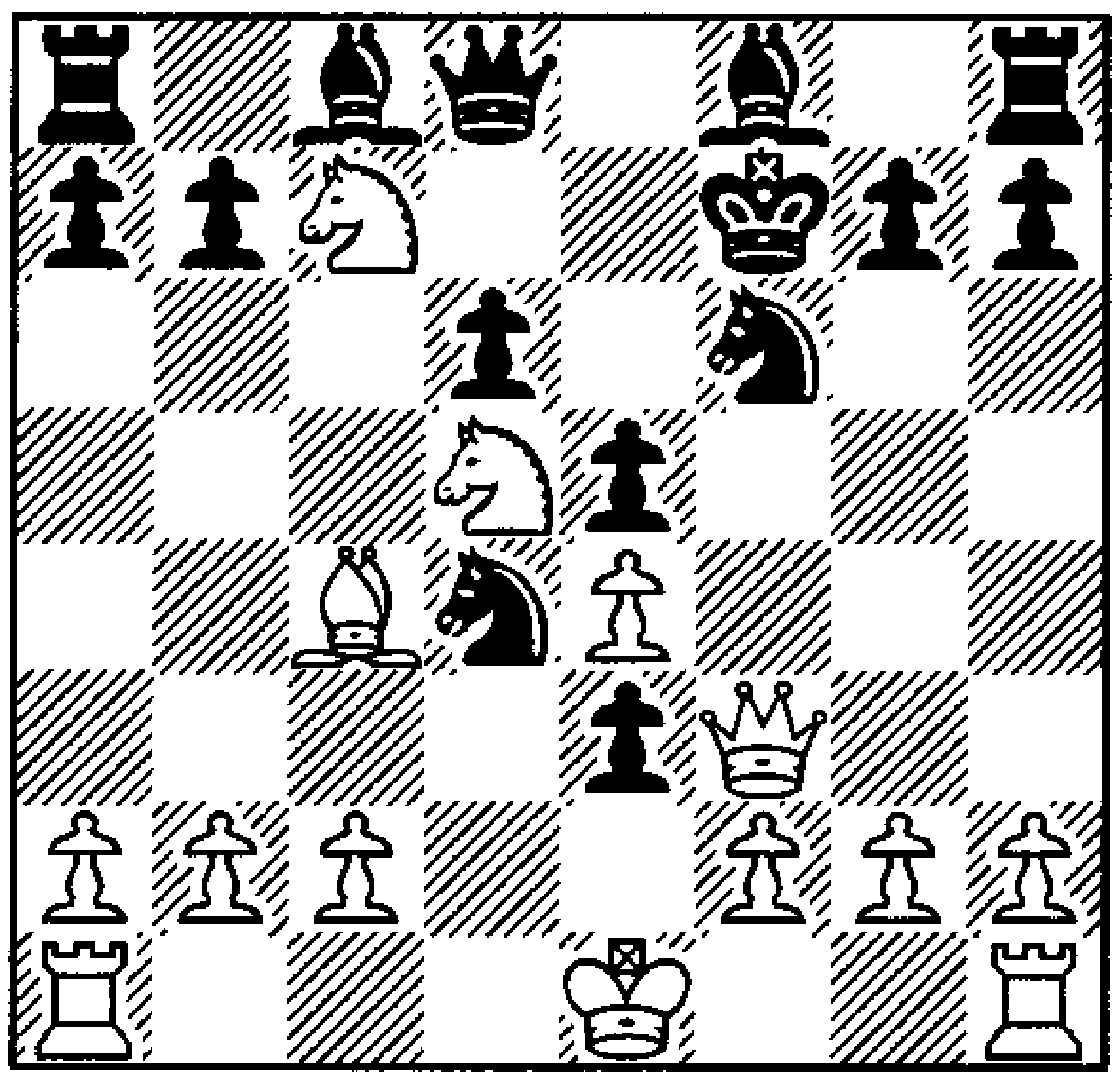
If 8...a6, then 9 ♘d5! axb5 10 ♗b6 ♕h4 11 ♘c7+ ♔d7 12 ♘xa8 ♕xe4+ 13 ♕e2 is decisive. 'And after 8...♘f6 9 ♗g5 a6 (9...♗e7 10 ♗xf6 gxf6? 11 ♕h5+ ♔f8 12 ♗c4 ♕e8 13 ♕h6 mate) 10 ♗xf6 gxf6 11 ♕h5+ ♔d7 12 ♕xf5+ ♔e8 13 ♕h5+ ♔d7 14 ♘a3 White is a pawn up with the better position.' (Maróczy)



9 ♘d5! fxe3 (there is already no way back) **10 ♘bc7+ ♔f7 11 ♕f3+?!**

11 ♘xa8 was probably stronger, for example: 11...exf2+ 12 ♔xf2 ♕h4+ 13 g3 ♕xe4 14 ♗g2. But Morphy did not want to divert his sights from the enemy king, and this presumptuousness allowed some counter-chances...

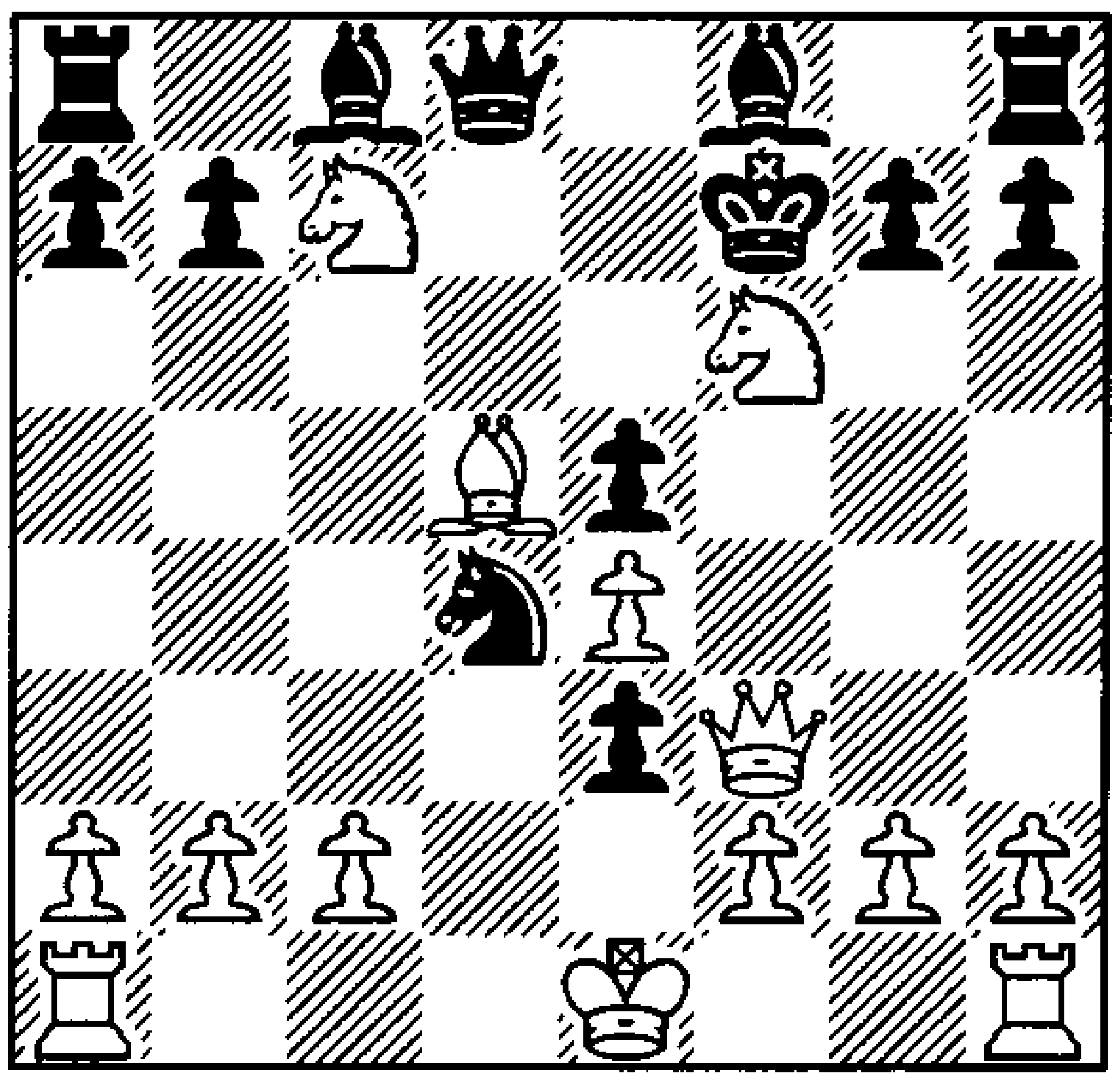
11...♘f6 12 ♗c4 ♘d4!



13 ♘xf6+ d5!

Bad is 13...♔e7 14 ♘fd5+ ♔d7 15 ♕f7+ ♗e7 (15...♔c6 16 ♘b4+) 16 fxe3 ♖f8 (or 16...♘xc2+ 17 ♔d2) 17 exd4 ♖xf7 18 ♗b5 mate. It is doubtful whether Anderssen worked out all the consequences of 13...♔g6, but his combinative feeling did not let him down: 14 ♕h5+ ♔xf6 15 ♘e8+ (Maróczy suggested '15 fxe3!, as in the game', but here after 15...♕xc7 16 ♖f1+ ♘f5 it comes to nothing) 15...♕xe8 16 ♕xe8 ♘xc2+ (16...d5 17 0-0-0!) 17 ♔f1 e2+! (17...♘xa1 18 g4!) 18 ♗xe2 ♘xa1 19 g4! and Black, despite the favourable material balance, is helpless against the new wave of the attack.

14 ♗xd5+



The critical moment of the battle.

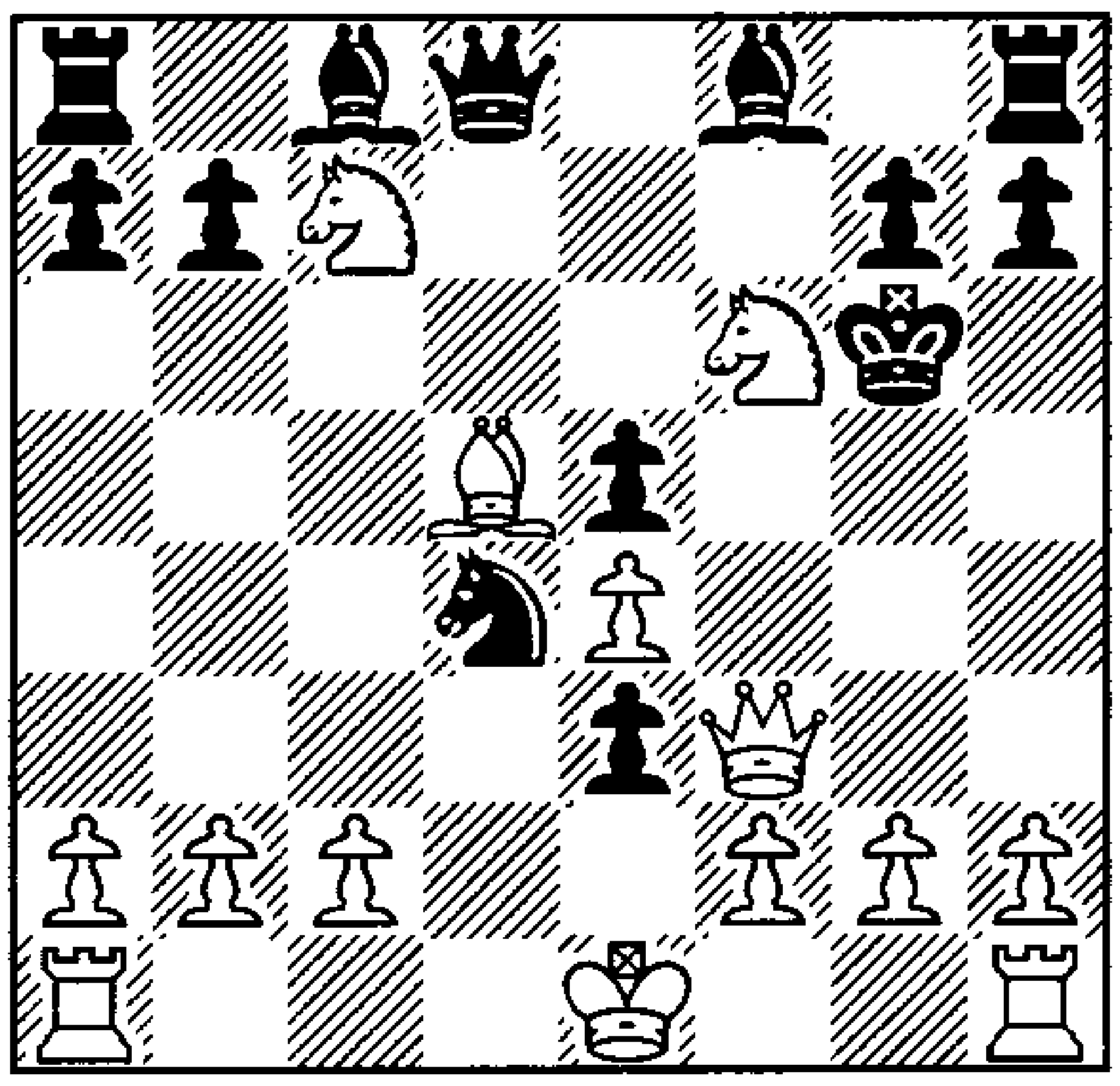
14...♔g6?

'An oversight! Black thought that after 15 ♕h5+ ♔xf6 16 ♕f7+ (*now 16 ♘e8+? is not possible because of 16...♕xe8 17 ♕xe8 ♗b4+ – G. K.*) 16...♔g5 he would be able to save his king, but he overlooked 16 fxe3! with a decisive attack on the f-file. The game was played very quickly, otherwise Anderssen would undoubtedly have noticed this simple move,' writes Maróczy. 'It was possible to avoid the immediate danger by 14...♕xd5 15 ♘fxd5+ ♘xf3+ 16 gxf3 exf2+ 17 ♔xf2 ♗c5+ 18 ♔e2 ♖b8 when Black, with two bishops against two knights, does not stand badly.' But in my opinion he is a simply a pawn down, and after 19 b4 ♗f8 (19...♗d6 20 ♘b5) 20 ♖hd1 (or 20 c4 immediately) 20...♗d7 21 c4 he has a technically lost ending.

White would have been caused more problems by Zukertort's suggestion of 14...♔e7:

1) 15 ♘g8+?! ♔d6 16 ♕f7 ♘xc2+ 17 ♔d1 (17 ♔e2 ♗g4+ 18 f3 ♘d4+ 19 ♔xe3 ♕xc7 20 ♕xc7+ ♔xc7 21 fxg4 ♗d6) 17...♘xa1 18 ♘xa8 ♗g4+ 19 f3 ♗d7! and Black is winning;

2) 15 ♕h5 gxf6 16 ♕f7+ ♔d6 17 ♘xa8! (the only way: 17 ♘e8+? ♕xe8 18 ♕xe8 ♘xc2+ 19 ♔f1 e2+ 20 ♔g1 ♘xa1 etc.) 17...♘xc2+ (17...♕e7 18 0-0-0) 18 ♔e2 ♕e7 19 ♕xe7+ ♗xe7 20 ♖ac1 ♘d4+ 21 ♔xe3 ♗d7 22 ♖c7! ♖xa8 23 ♖xb7 ♗c6 24 ♗xc6 ♘xc6 25 ♖c1 ♘d8 26 ♖d1+ ♔e6 27 ♖c7 ♖b8. According to Maróczy, 'White's position is slightly better,' but in my view after 28 b3 Black cannot hold out.



15 ♕h5+ ♔xf6 16 fxe3!

Perhaps Anderssen was hoping that his young opponent would lose his way in the mass of tactical complications, but Morphy maintained a clear head. It turns out that the king can be finished off on the open f-file not only in the King's Gambit...

16...♘xc2+

This loses immediately, but 16...♕xc7 would merely have prolonged the agony: 17 ♖f1+ (much clearer than Maróczy's suggestion of 17 exd4 ♔e7 18 0-0-0) 17...♘f5 (17...♔e7? 18 ♖f7+) 18 ♖xf5+! ♗xf5 19 ♕xf5+ ♔e7 20 ♕e6+ ♔d8 21 0-0-0! ♗d6 (or 21...♕d7 22 ♗xb7) 22 ♗xb7 etc.

17 ♔e2 1-0

Black resigned in view of the continuation 17...♘xa1 18 ♖f1+ ♔e7 19 ♕xe5+ ♔d7 20 ♗e6+ ♔c6 21 ♖c1+ ♔b6 22 ♕b5 mate.

An impressive defeat of the champion of the Old World! This game lasted all of half an hour. After gaining revenge on the 77th move in the very next game, Anderssen joked gloomily: 'Morphy wins in 17 moves, whereas it takes me 77. However, this is still bearable...' By winning the 11th game, Morphy won the match (+7 -2 =2), and thus in just one year he had demonstrated that he had no equal in the world.

'Morphy possesses the secret of invincibility,' the newspapers enthused. The loser, although shocked, also worthily assessed his opponent's triumph, publicly declaring that Morphy played much more strongly and solidly than La Bourdonnais, and admitting: 'It is useless fighting against this man; for me he is too strong. He is accurate and faultless, like a machine, whereas I am only a mere mortal...' Later Anderssen shared an important observation: 'Morphy treats chess with the seriousness and conscientiousness of an artist... For him a game of chess is a sacred duty...'

Before Morphy left Paris a splendid farewell banquet was held in his honour. To the applause of the public, the chairman Saint-

Amant crowned with a laurel wreath a marble bust, specially made for the occasion, of the 'king of all kings', which became one of the sights of the Café de la Régence.

Paul was greeted even more triumphantly in New York. An official celebration in his honour took place in a hall seating two thousand, where enormous shields were erected with the names of his defeated opponents. When Morphy appeared a hymn was played; then the chess king was presented with a gift from the nation – a rosewood table, encrusted with pearl and silver, a chess board with squares of mother-of-pearl and ebony, with gold and silver pieces on cornelian pedestals... He was also presented with a gold clock with diamonds, where the hours were indicated by red and black chess pieces. For the first time in the history of chess a victory was recognised as an event of national importance!

Alas, after this Morphy abandoned the chess arena forever. In the early 60s, when the Civil War broke out in the USA, he showed the first signs of mental disorder, and within a few years it turned out that the great maestro was lost not only to chess... In the 70s he could be seen just once a day, always at the same time, walking the streets of New Orleans. Legend has it that not long before his death, in 1882, he exchanged greetings with Zukertort, who was performing in the town, and that in 1883 he chatted for about ten minutes at his home with Steinitz... In the summer of 1884, at the age of 47, the legendary American passed away.

What was the secret of Morphy's invincibility? I think that it was a combination of a unique natural talent and brilliant erudition. His play was the next, more mature stage in the development of chess. Morphy had a well-developed 'feeling for position', and therefore he can be confidently regarded as the 'first swallow' – the prototype of the strong 20th century grandmaster.

Like Philidor previously, Morphy was greatly ahead of his time. As Euwe put it: 'if the distinguishing feature of a genius is that he is far ahead compared with his epoch, then Morphy was a chess genius in the complete sense of the word.' He spontaneously established the three main principles of opening play: 1) the rapid development of the pieces; 2) the seizure of the centre; 3) the opening of lines. To formulate these and other principles of positional play required a further quarter of a century and the mighty intellect of the next chess titan – Wilhelm Steinitz...

In conclusion, here are some interesting views of the world champions.

Lasker: 'In Paul Morphy the spirit of La Bourdonnais had arisen anew, only more vigorous, firmer, prouder... Morphy discovered that the brilliant move of a master is essentially conditional not on a sudden and inexplicable realisation, but on the placing of the pieces on the board. He introduced the rule: brilliant moves and deep winning manoeuvres are possible only in those positions where the opponent can be opposed with an abundance of active energy... From the very first moves Morphy aimed to disclose the internal energy located in his pieces. It was suddenly revealed that they possess far greater dynamism than the opponent's forces.'

Capablanca: 'Reviewing the history of chess from La Bourdonnais to the masters of our day right up to Lasker, we discover that the greatest stylist was Morphy. He did not look for complicated combinations, but he also did not avoid them, which really is the correct way of playing... His main strength lay not in his combinative gift, but in his positional play and general style. Morphy gained most of his wins by playing directly and simply, and it is this simple and logical method that constitutes the true brilliance of his play, if it is considered from the viewpoint of the great masters.'

Alekhine: 'How much more vivid, more rich does the figure of Morphy appear before us, how much clearer does the secret of his success and charm become, if we transfer ourselves in our thoughts to that era when he lived and created, if we take the trouble to study, if only a little, his contemporaries! Then... in London and in particular in Paris, where the traditions of Philidor were still alive, where the immortal creations of La Bourdonnais and McDonnell were still in the memory, at that time, finally, when Anderssen was alive, and with brilliance alone it was hardly possible to surprise anyone. The strength, the invincible strength of Morphy – this was the reason for his success and the guarantee of his immortality!' And Morphy's strength, according to Alekhine, was his 'deeply considered positional play, primarily of an aggressive character.'

Botvinnik: 'To this day Morphy is an unsurpassed master of the open games. Just how great was his significance is evident from the fact that after Morphy nothing substantially new has been created in this field. Every player – from beginner to master – should in his praxis return again and again to the games of the American genius.'

Fischer: 'A popularly held theory about Paul Morphy is that if he returned to the chess world today and played our best contemporary players, he would come out the loser. Nothing is further from the truth. In a set match, Morphy would beat anybody alive today... Morphy was perhaps the most accurate chess player who ever lived. He had complete sight of the board and never blundered, in spite of the fact that he played quite rapidly, rarely taking more than five minutes to decide a move. (His opponents, in those days before chess clocks, often took hours.)' Perhaps his only weakness was in closed games like the Dutch Defence. But even then, he was usually victorious because of his resourcefulness.'

Smyslov: 'There is no doubt that for Morphy chess was an art, and for chess Morphy was a great artist. His play was captivated by freshness of thought and inexhaustible energy. He played with inspiration, without striving to penetrate into the psychology of the opponent; he played, if one can express it so, "pure chess". His harmonious positional understanding and deep intuition would have made Morphy a highly dangerous opponent even for any player of our times.'

It would appear that each world champion considered Morphy's play through the prism of his own approach to chess. Each found in him the source of his own strength! And so, summing up all that has been said, Morphy can be regarded as the forefather of modern chess.

CHAPTER TWO

Wilhelm the First

Wilhelm Steinitz (14 May 1836 – 2 August 1900) was not only the first world champion, but also a great researcher, the creator of a new, *positional chess school.* His life's work was fully appreciated by the next chess king – Lasker:

'When Paul Morphy, despairing of life, renounced chess, Caissa fell into deep mourning and into dreary thoughts... The games of the masters of that period are planless; the great models of the past are known, and the masters try to follow them and to equal them, but they do not succeed. The masters give themselves over to reflection. One of them reflects for a long time and intensely on Paul Morphy, and gratefully Caissa encourages him; and the greatest landmark in the history of chess is reached: Steinitz announces the principles of strategy, the result of inspired thought and imagination... In order to distinguish between the true and the false principles, Steinitz had to dig deep to lay bare the roots of the art possessed by Morphy...

'The reason for a plan's having no existence *a priori*, is that its existence is merely *asserted*, and to make such an assertion requires the boldness of genius. For this assertion implies that the position on the board must show a sign, a characteristic moment, which tells us what plan to follow and thus relieve us of the necessity of searching through an immense mass of variations... The world did not comprehend how much Steinitz had given it; even chess players did not comprehend it. And yet his thought was revolutionary... This fundamental and universal principle may be briefly expressed as follows: the basis of a masterly plan is always a valuation. To evaluate, to judge, to estimate a thing does not pretend to exact knowledge. But knowledge by estimate, by judgement, by evaluation, though not exact, according to the principle of Steinitz, is still an efficient guide for the master.'

Steinitz isolated a number of significant positional features and discovered that brilliant attacks are often successful only because of very weak defence. After sharply raising the art of defence, he, in the words of Euwe, 'cast doubts on the widely-accepted, thanks to the victories of Morphy and Anderssen, axiom about the need to attack!' And instead of this he put forward the concept of the *well-founded attack*, resulting from the continuous accumulation of small advantages.

His teaching became a turning point in chess history: it was from Steinitz that the era of modern chess began. The contribution of the first world champion to its development is comparable with the great scientific discoveries of the 19th century.

'The Modern Calabrese'

Steinitz was born in a Prague ghetto, into the family of a tailor, in which he was child number nine; the next four all died in early childhood and he, the last remaining, maintained that he was the 13th all through his life. He learned chess by watching his father play. After finishing school in the mid-fifties, he continued his education in Vienna, which had ancient chess traditions (it is sufficient to recall the names of Allgaier, Hamppe and Falkbeer). When in London and Paris the fame of Morphy and Anderssen was at its height, in a small Vienna café a certain poor student was making a living by playing for stakes...

Chess captivated Steinitz entirely. For the sake of it he gave up the higher polytechnic school, which promised the comfortable life of a qualified engineer, and soon he was the strongest player in Vienna. And when in 1862 an invitation arrived from London to the second international tournament, the Vienna Chess Society decided to send their 26-year-old champion to it.

Steinitz's international debut was not bad: sixth prize out of 14 participants (all of five pounds sterling!), but the main thing was his memorable win over Mongrédien. The winner of the tournament, the legendary Adolf Anderssen, acknowledged it to be 'the most bold and brilliant game', and called Steinitz 'a rising chess star'. In turn, the organisers called the game 'the diamond of the Austrian champion' and awarded it a special prize, as the most brilliant in the tournament.

Game 11

W.Steinitz-A.Mongrédien

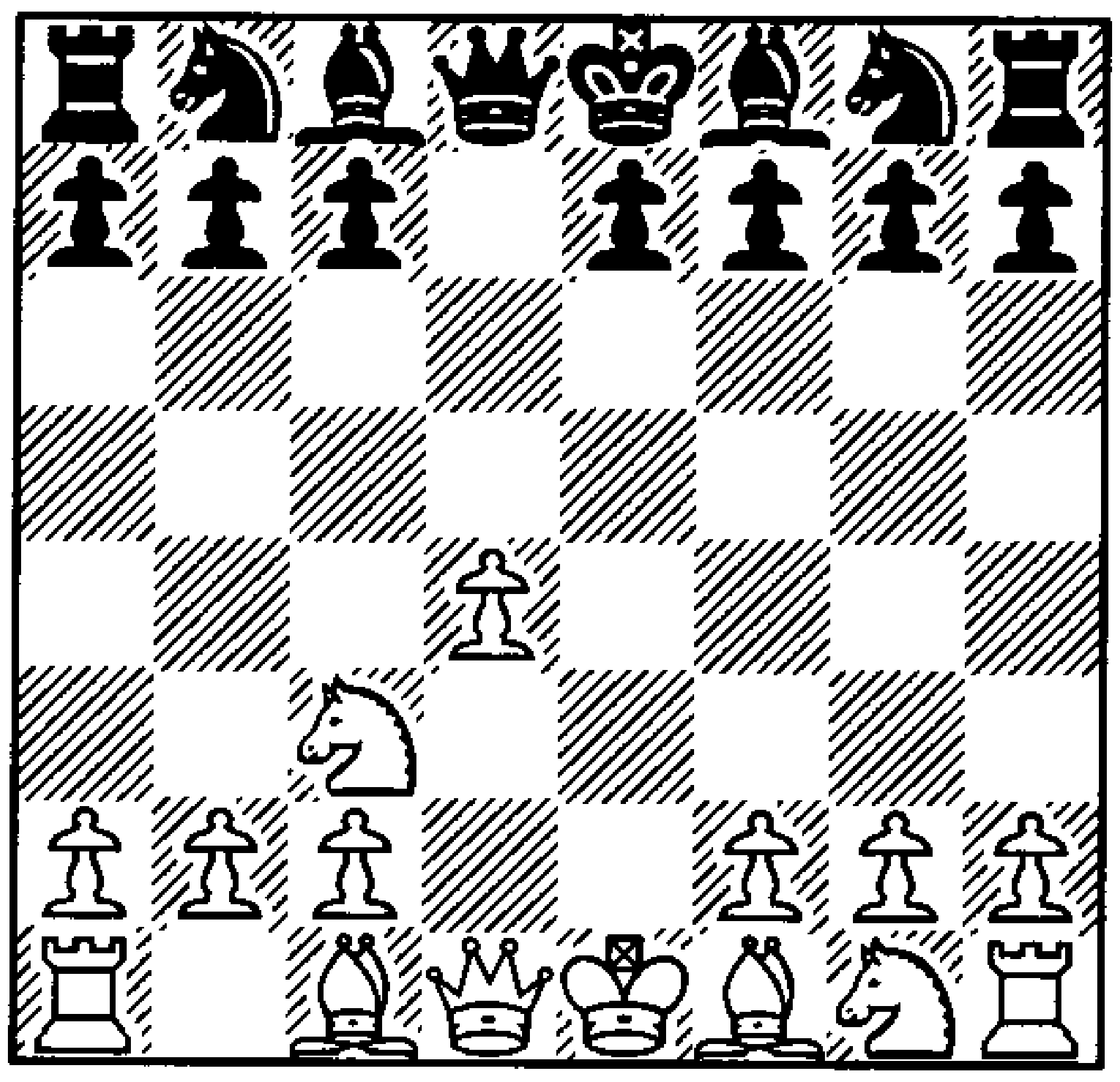
London 1862

Scandinavian Defence B01

1 e4 d5 2 exd5 ♕xd5 3 ♘c3 ♕d8?!

A move that is mentioned back in ancient manuscripts. More popular and natural is 3...♕a5 with definite counter-chances, as even occurred in the Kasparov-Anand match (New York 14th matchgame 1995).

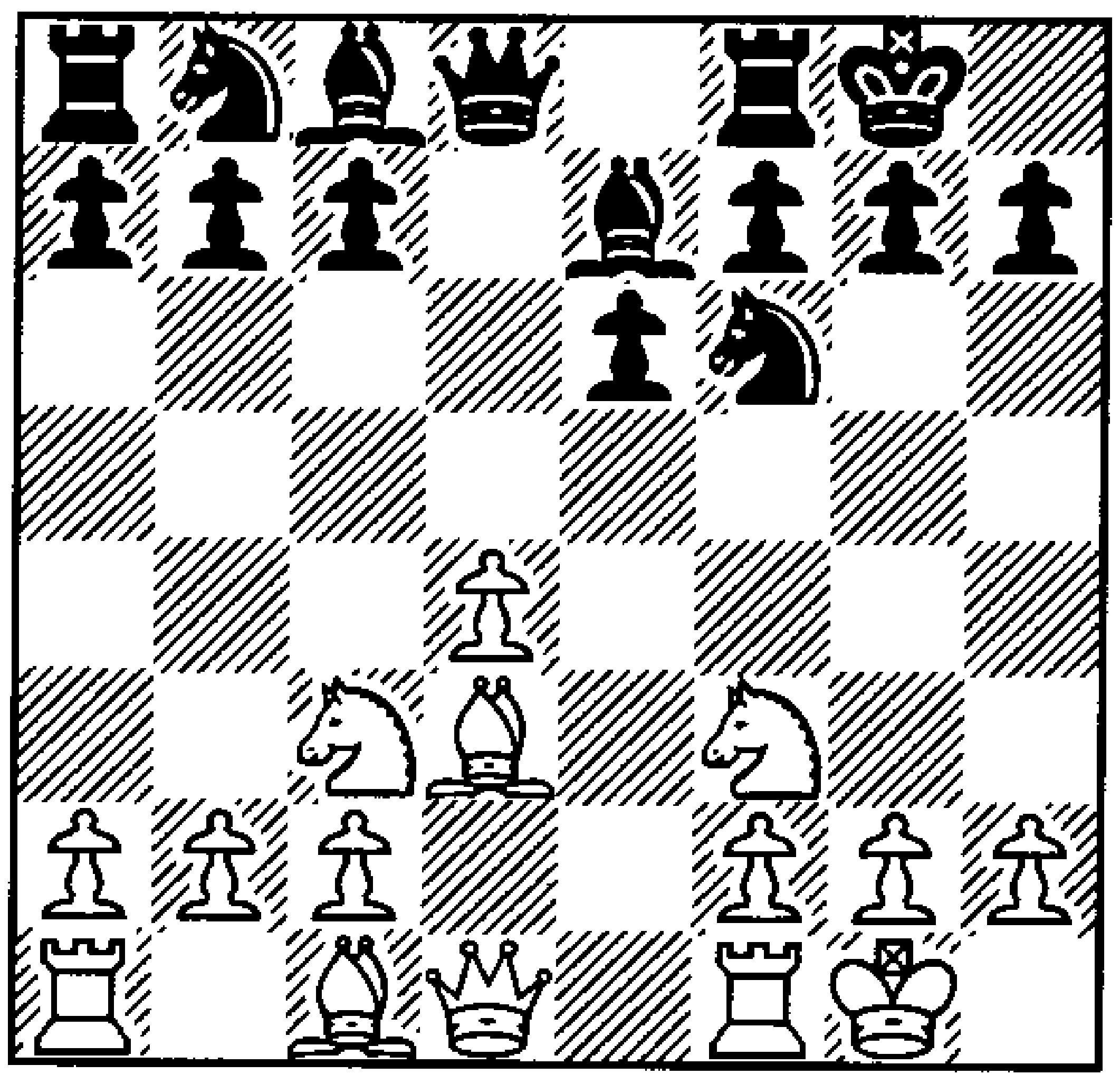
4 d4



4...e6 (after 4...♘f6 Fischer played 5 ♗c4 ♗f5 6 ♕f3!, and after 4...g6 – 5 ♗f4 ♗g7 6 ♕d2!) **5 ♘f3 ♘f6 6 ♗d3 ♗e7 7 0-0**

7 ♕e2 ♘c6 8 ♗e3 ♘b4 9 ♗c4 ♘bd5 is unclear.

7...0-0



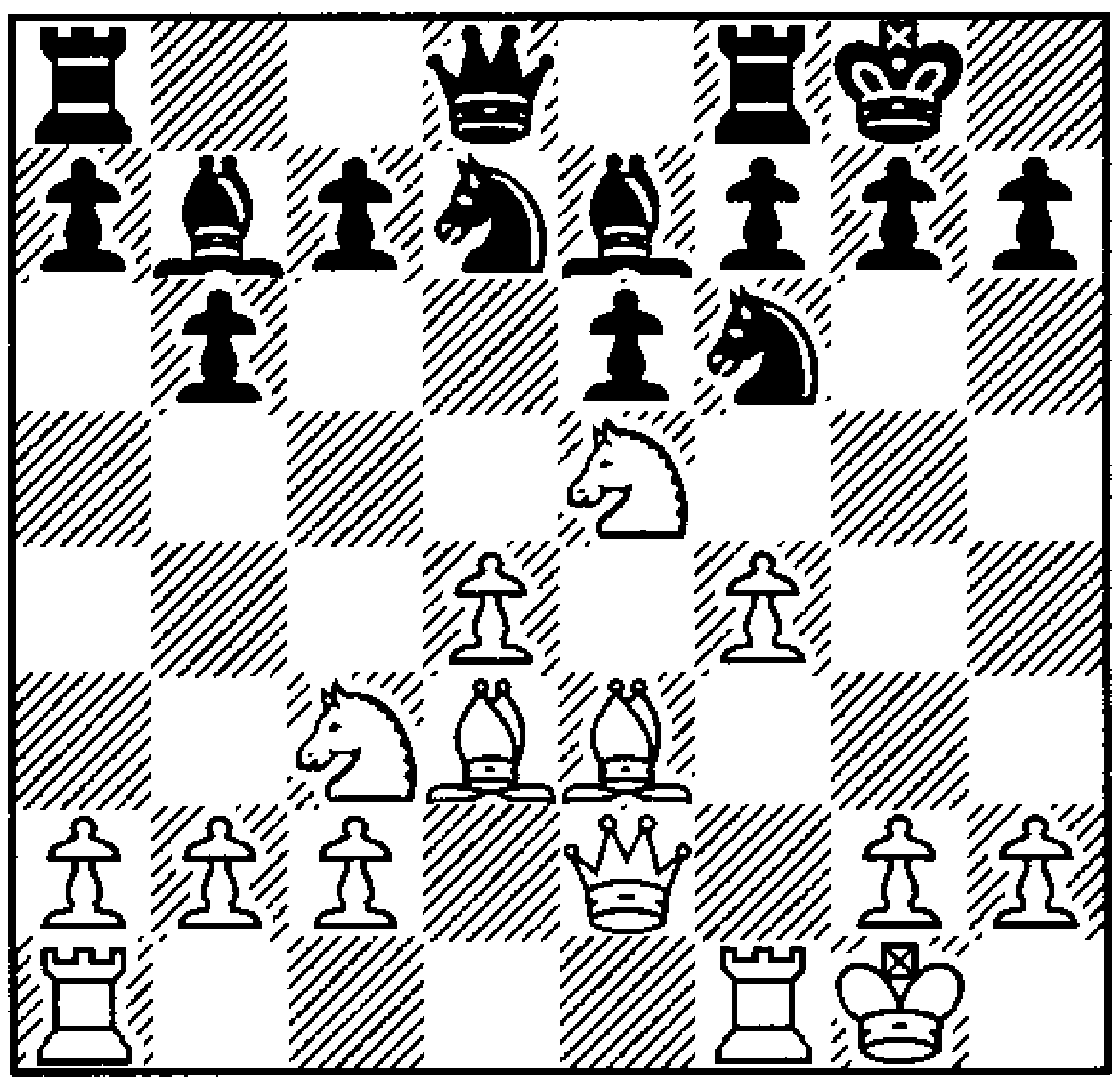
A 'French' type of position has arisen, but with an extra tempo for White. In Black's justification it can be said that a similar position (with the bishop at c4) occurred in the game Alekhine-Schlechter (Carlsbad 1911).

8 ♗e3 (the alternative is 8 ♕e2 ♘c6 9 ♖d1 ♘b4 10 ♗c4 ♘bd5 11 ♘e4 or 8 ♘e5!? c5 9 dxc5) **8...b6**

Or 8...♘bd7 9 ♘e5!

9 ♘e5 ♗b7 10 f4 ♘bd7 (10...♘c6!?) **11 ♕e2**

'11 f5 came into consideration,' writes Yakov Neishtadt in his book *The First World Champion* (1971). However, I am not sure that White has any advantage after 11...exf5 12 ♖xf5 (12 ♗xf5 ♘xe5 13 dxe5 ♘d5) 12...♘xe5 13 dxe5 ♘d5 14 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 15 ♕g4 g6.

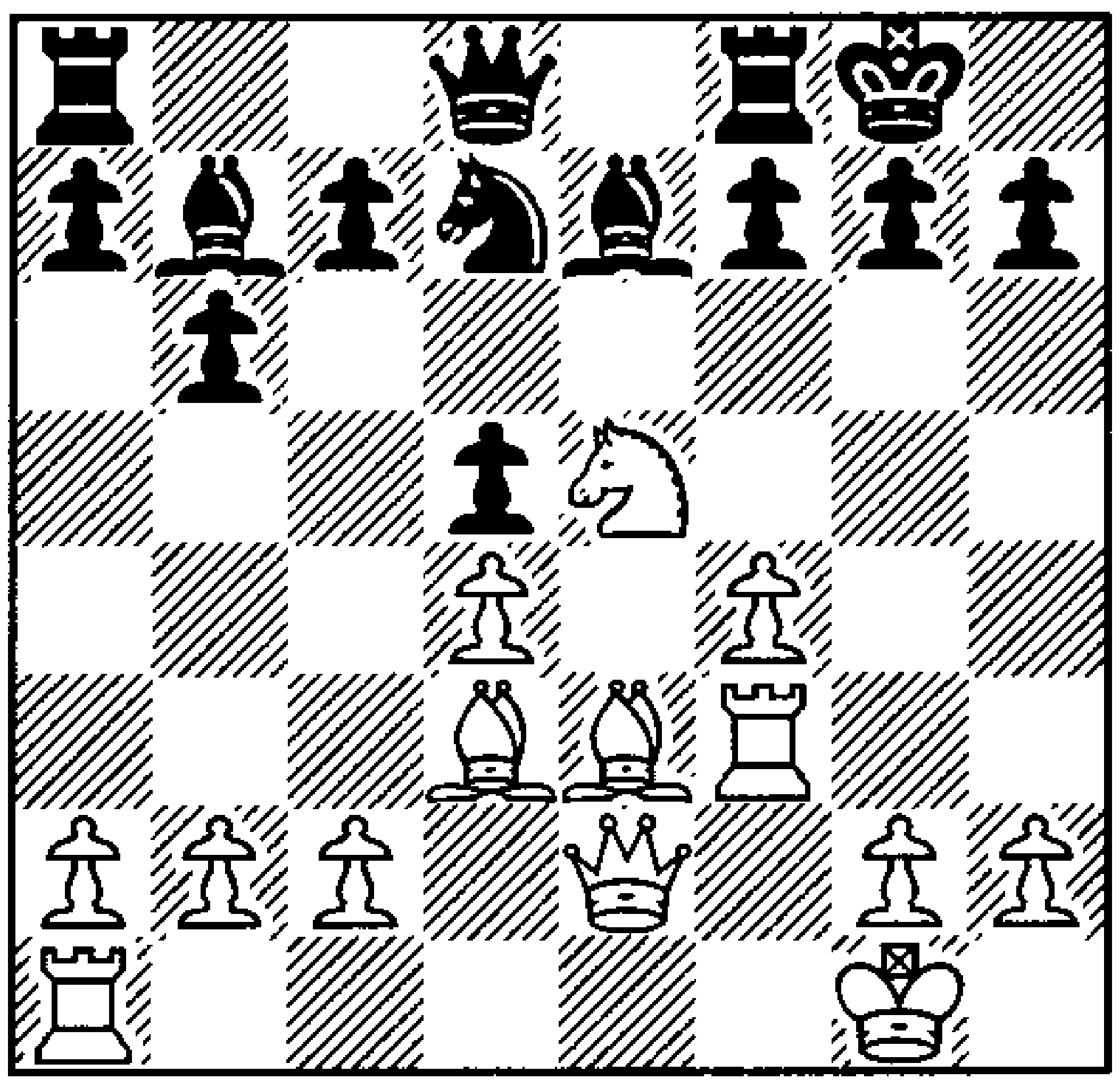


11...♘d5?! (11...c5 is more logical, although after 12 ♖ad1 White is a little better) **12 ♘xd5 exd5**

If 12...♗xd5, not shutting in the bishop and controlling the f3-square, then 13 c4 ♗b7 14 ♖ad1.

13 ♖f3

With the classic threat of 14 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 15 ♖h3+ and ♕h5. Neishtadt also considers 13 ♕h5!? ♘f6 14 ♕h3 with the idea of 14...♗c8 15 f5!



13...f5!

Avoiding the rout that is possible after 13...♘xe5?! 14 fxe5 f6 15 ♖h3 (15...g6 16 ♖xh7!) or 13...♘f6?! 14 ♖h3 (with the threat of g2-g4-g5) 14...♗c8 (14...♘e4 15 ♗xe4 dxe4 16 ♕h5 h6 17 ♖g3! etc.) 15 f5 ♗d6 16 ♗g5! h6 17 ♗h4 ♖e8 18 ♗b5! ♗xf5 19 ♗xe8 ♕xe8 20 ♖f3 ♗g4 21 ♗xf6 ♗xf3 22 ♕xf3 gxf6 23 ♘g4.

14 ♖h3 (better is 14 ♖af1!? with an enduring positional initiative) **14...g6**

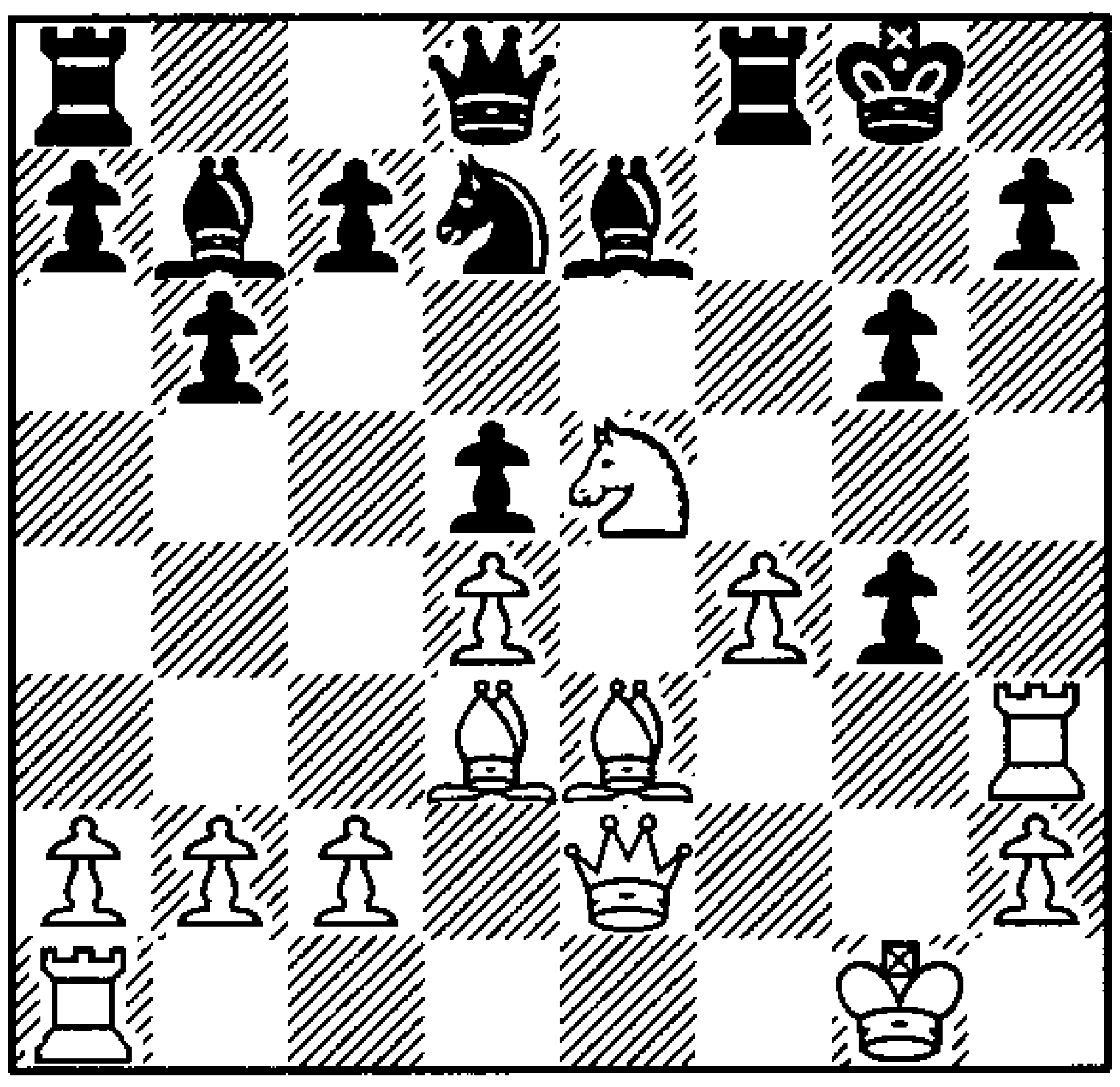
Parrying ♕h5 and intending ...♘f6. Bad is 14...c5? (14...♕e8? 15 ♗b5) 15 ♕h5 ♘f6 16 ♕xf5 ♗c8 17 ♕xh7+! ♘xh7 18 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 19 ♘g6 mate.

15 g4?!

According to Lasker 'vigorous and enterprising play', but in my view debatable, to say the least.

15...fxg4?

Essential was the variation 15...♘xe5 16 fxe5 ♗c8! (but not 16...fxg4? 17 ♖xh7!, as in the game) 17 gxf5 ♗xf5, and White has absolutely nothing! Now, however, the defence collapses.



16 ♖xh7!?

The start of a bold combination, which brought Steinitz the brilliancy prize. But was the rook sacrifice correct? Did Black not have a better defence, or White a bloodless way to win?

After giving these questions to readers of the *Los Angeles Times* and *Welt am Sonntag*, which published extracts from the forthcoming book, I switched on my computer and began comparing my preliminary conclusions with the opinions of previous commentators of this game. My 'iron friend' Fritz, as always, caused surprise with its interesting variations, not reflected in chess literature. I think that even the great Steinitz himself did not suspect how many exciting adventures remained off-stage in this 'hit' game!

First, it transpired that the simple 16 ♕xg4!, threatening sacrifices on g6 and h7, is decisive. After 16...♘f6? Neishtadt suggested 17 ♕g2, and if 17...♗c8, then 18 ♖xh7! ♔xh7 19 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 20 ♔h1, but more forcing is 17 ♕e6+! ♔g7 18 f5 ♗c8 (18...h5 19 ♘xg6 ♖f7 20 ♗h6+!) 19 ♗h6+ ♔h8 20 ♘xg6+ hxg6 21 ♗xf8+ ♘h5 22 ♖xh5+ gxh5 23 ♕h6+ ♔g8 24 ♕g7 mate (Fritz).

Therefore there only remains 16...♘xe5. Now it is important not to be tempted by 17 ♕e6+? ♘f7? 18 ♗xg6 ♗h4 19 ♕g4 hxg6 20 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 21 ♔h1! (but not 21 ♕h5+ ♔g7 22 ♖xh4 because of 22...♗c8 23 ♔h1 ♗f5 Fritz) 21...♖g8 22 ♕xf7 ♖g7 23 ♕h5+ ♖h7 24 ♕e5+ ♗f6 (24...♕f6 25 ♖xh4!) 25 ♖xh7+ ♔xh7 26 ♕f5+ ♔g7 (or 26...♔h8 27 ♕h3+ ♗h4 28 ♖g1 ♗c8 29 ♕g2 ♕f8 30 ♕g6) 27 ♖g1+ ♔f7 28 ♕h7+ ♔e6 29 f5+ ♔d6 30 ♖g6! ♕e7 31 ♖xf6+ ♕xf6 32 ♗f4+ ♔c6 33 ♕xc7+ ♔b5 34 ♕xb7 ♕xd4 35 a4+! ♔a5 36 ♕xa8 and White wins. The surprising 17...♖f7!! refutes the bold queen sortie: 18 ♗xg6 (the only chance: 18 fxe5? ♗c8 or 18 ♕xe5? ♗f6 19 ♕e6 ♗c8) 18...hxg6 (18...♘xg6 19 ♖xh7 is not so clear) 19 fxe5 ♗c8 20 ♕xg6+ ♖g7, when the attack peters out and White is behind in material.

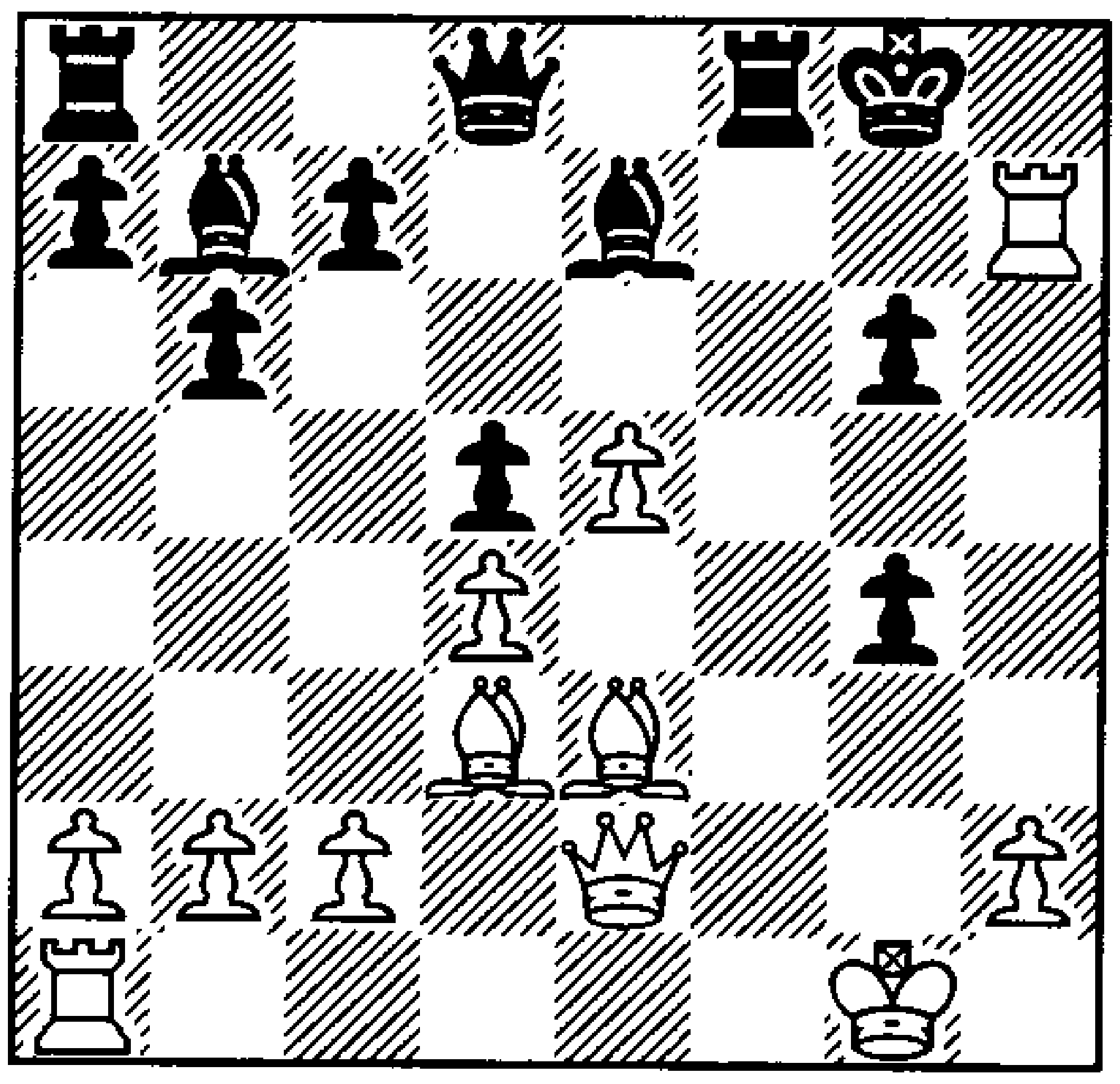
Correct is 17 dxe5! (but not 17 fxe5? ♗c8! 18 e6 ♖f6 and wins) with the threat of ♗xg6, and Black has no defence: 17...♕c8 18 e6 ♖f6 (18...♕e8 19 f5) 19 f5 ♕f8 20 fxg6 hxg6 21 ♗xg6 ♕g7 22 ♖g3 wins or 17...♗c8 18 e6 ♖f6 19 f5 ♕f8 (19...♗c5 20 ♗xc5 bxc5 21 ♖e1 ♕e8 22 fxg6 wins, while if 19...c5 there is both the modest 20 fxg6, and the extravagant 20 ♖xh7 ♔xh7 21 ♕h3+ ♔g8 22 fxg6 ♖xg6+ 23 ♗xg6 ♗h4 24 ♗f7+ ♔h8 25 ♕g4) 20 ♗g5 ♗c5+ 21 ♔h1 ♖xf5 (21...gxf5? 22 ♗xf6+ fxg4 23 ♗xh7 mate) 22 ♗h6 ♕f6 23 ♗xf5 ♕xf5 24 ♕xf5 gxf5 25 ♖g3+ ♔h8 26 e7 etc.

Second, it was confirmed that the rook sacrifice also wins, although this is a more thorny path to the goal.

16...♘xe5

Or 16...♔xh7 17 ♕xg4, and 17...♘xe5 18 fxe5 has to be played, since 17...♘f6? is bad: 18 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 19 ♕h6+ ♔g8 20 ♔h1! and wins.

17 fxe5



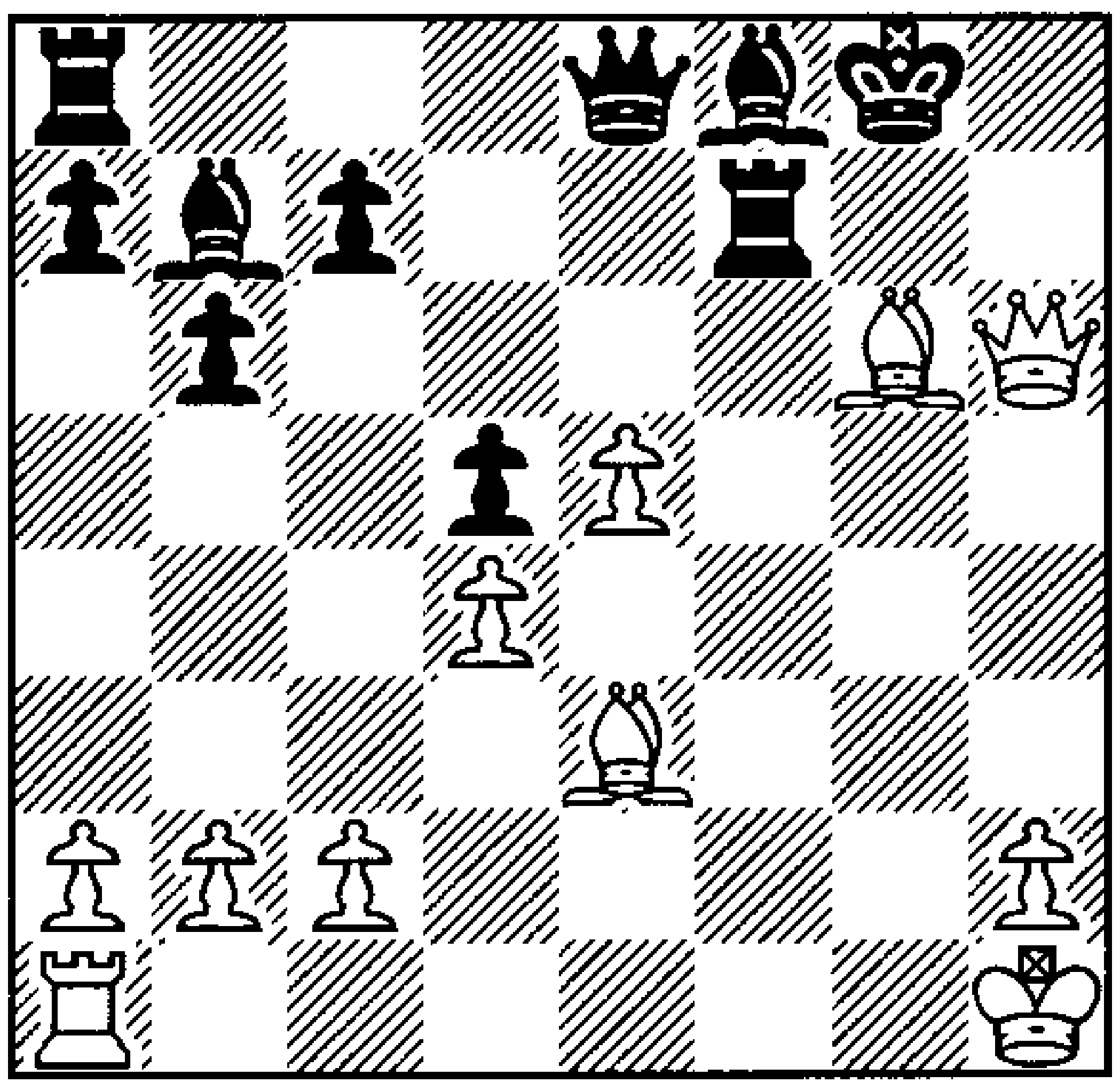
17...♔xh7

After the desperate 17...♗g5?! (17...♗a6?! 18 ♖h6!) there is a pleasant choice between 18 ♗xg5 ♕xg5 19 ♖xc7 g3 (or 19...♗c8 20 ♔h1) 20 hxg3! (20 ♖xb7? ♖f2) 20...♕xg3+ 21 ♕g2 ♕e3+ 22 ♔h1 ♕h6+ 23 ♕h2 and 18 ♗xg6 ♖f3 (incidentally, 17...♖f3 18 ♗xg6 ♗g5 would have come to the same thing) 19 ♗f2! (but not 19 ♗xg5? ♕xg5 20 ♖xc7 ♕xg6 21 ♖xb7 ♖af8 22 ♕g2 ♕e4 and ...♕f4 with sufficient counterplay) 19...♗f4 20 ♗h4 ♗g5 21 ♕g2!! ♗c8 22 ♖f1!, and in both cases White is in charge.

18 ♕xg4 ♖g8?

This loses without any questions, as does 18...♖f5? – after 19 ♗xf5 gxf5 20 ♕xf5+ ♔g7 (20...♔h8 21 ♕h5+) 21 ♔h1! the black king is finished off by a check from g1. But the best defence 18...♕e8! would have forced White to play very accurately: 19 ♕h5+ ♔g7! (not

19...♔g8 20 ♗xg6 ♖f7 21 ♔h1 ♗f8 22 ♖g1 ♗g7 23 ♗h6! and wins) 20 ♕h6+ ♔g8 21 ♗xg6 ♖f7 22 ♔h1! ♗f8.



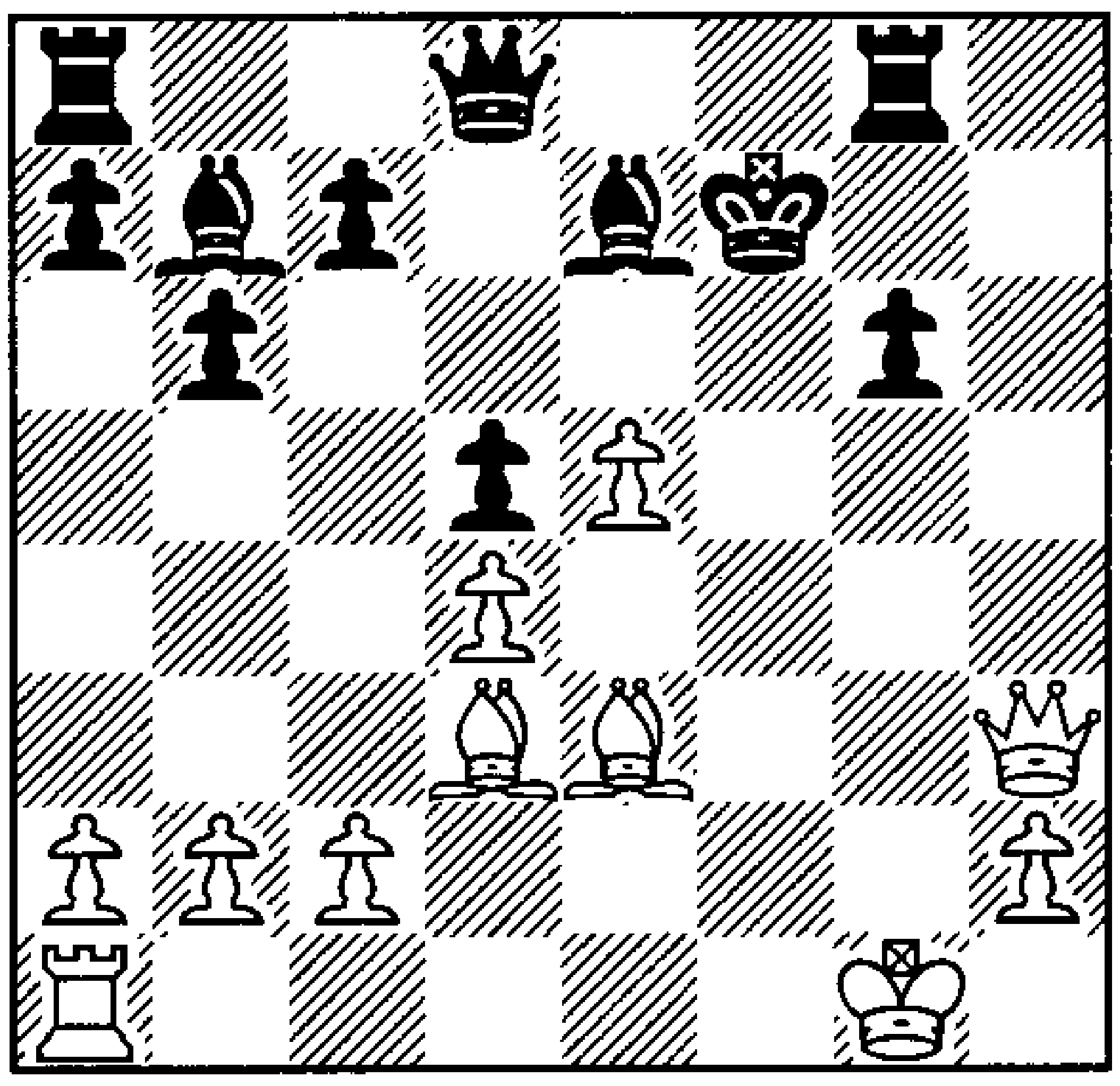
Analysis diagram

Here the readers of the aforementioned newspapers together with the computer discovered two attractive possibilities:

1) 23 ♗xf7+ ♕xf7 24 ♖g1+ ♗g7 25 ♕f6! ♖e8 26 ♗h6 ♕xf6 27 exf6 ♖e1! 28 ♖xe1! (after 28 ♗xg7 ♖xg1+ 29 ♔xg1 ♔f7 30 ♔f2 ♗c8 31 ♔e3 ♗f5 32 c3 ♔e6 the endgame is not so clear: the bishop at g7 is passive, and only a special analysis can establish whether or not the white king will break through on the queenside) 28...♗xh6 29 ♖e7 ♗f4 30 h4 – Black is not able to coordinate the actions of his bishops, and the white king comes into play with decisive effect.

2) 23 ♕h5, and Black has no defence: 23...♕d7 (or 23...♕e6) 24 ♖g1 ♗g7 25 ♕h7+! ♔f8 26 ♗xf7 ♕xf7 27 ♖xg7 ♕f1+ 28 ♖g1 ♕f3+ 29 ♖g2 ♕f1+ 30 ♗g1, or 23...♗g7!? 24 ♖g1! (24 ♕h7+ ♔f8 25 ♗h6 gives only perpetual check: 25...♗xh6! 26 ♕xh6+ ♔e7 27 ♕g5+ ♔f8) 24...♔f8 25 ♖g3!! (the only move; after 25 ♗xf7 ♕xf7 26 ♖g6 ♕f1+ 27 ♖g1 ♕f7 Black saves the game) 25...♖f1+ 25 ♔g2 and wins (Fritz).

19 ♕h5+ ♔g7 20 ♕h6+ (of course, not 20 ♕xg6+? ♔h8!) **20...♔f7 21 ♕h7+ ♔e6** (21...♖g7 22 ♗xg6+ ♔f8 23 ♕h8+ ♖g8 24 ♗h6 mate) **22 ♕h3+! ♔f7**



23 ♖f1+

23 e6+ would have also concluded the pursuit of the king, forcing mate in another eight moves.

23...♔e8 24 ♕e6 ♖g7 25 ♗g5 (dual solutions – 25 ♗b5+ and 25 ♗h6!) **25...♕d7**

Or 25...♗c8 26 ♕c6+ ♗d7 27 ♕xg6+ ♖xg6 28 ♗xg6 mate.

26 ♗xg6+ ♖xg6 (26...♔d8 27 ♖f8+ and mate) **27 ♕xg6+ ♔d8 28 ♖f8+ ♕e8 29 ♕xe8 mate**

'Games that were deemed brilliant in recent international tournaments were no match for this one,' declared Chigorin in 1890.

After the tournament Steinitz settled in London, one of the chess capitals of the world, and quickly won over the public with his aggressive, uncompromising play. The elderly English master Walker even called him 'the modern Calabrese' (this was how Greco had been called long ago – as coming from Calabria). Yes, the early Steinitz was a fervent supporter of Anderssen and looked a worthy successor to him, playing in the good old combinative style...

In matches played in 1863 he crushed the young Joseph Blackburne (+7 -1 =2), the Belgian-born Frederick Deacon (+5 -1 =1) and Valentine Green (+7 =2). During this period he also won an instructive game against Augustus Mongrédien – incidentally, Morphy's last proper match opponent.

Game 12
W.Steinitz-A.Mongrédien
London 1863
Double Fianchetto B06

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 c3

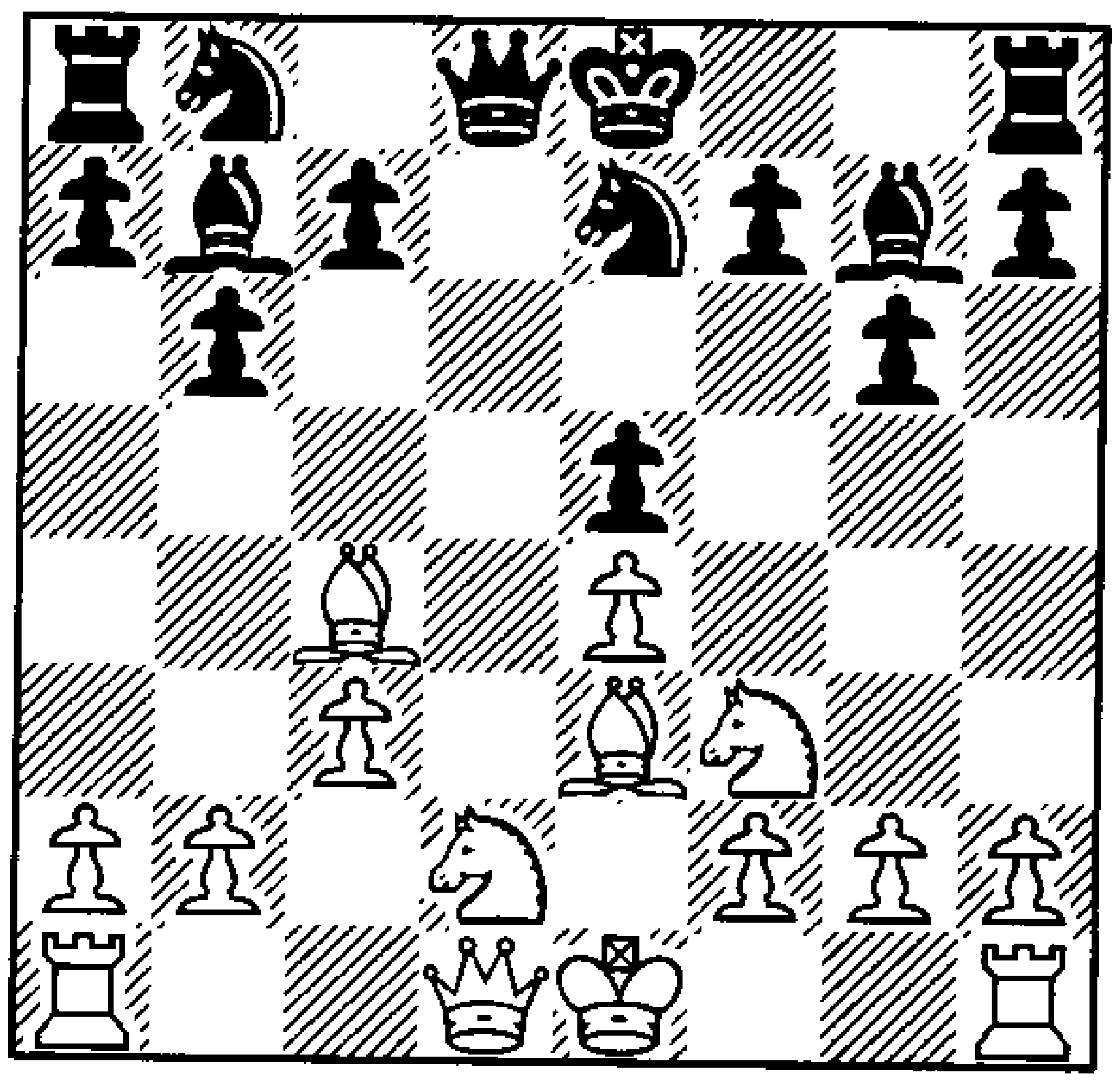
‘Typical of Steinitz: more than anything he is careful not to end up with weak pawns in the centre.’ (Euwe)

3...b6 4 ♗e3 ♗b7 5 ♘d2 d6 6 ♘gf3 (White is not tempted by the committal 6 f4)

6...e5?!

Much sounder was 7...♘d7, and if 8 a4, then 8...a6, in the spirit of a game from... the Petrosian-Spassky match (Moscow 16th matchgame 1966).

7 dxe5! (shutting in the bishop at g7) **7...dxe5 8 ♗c4 ♘e7?** (8...♕e7 was essential)

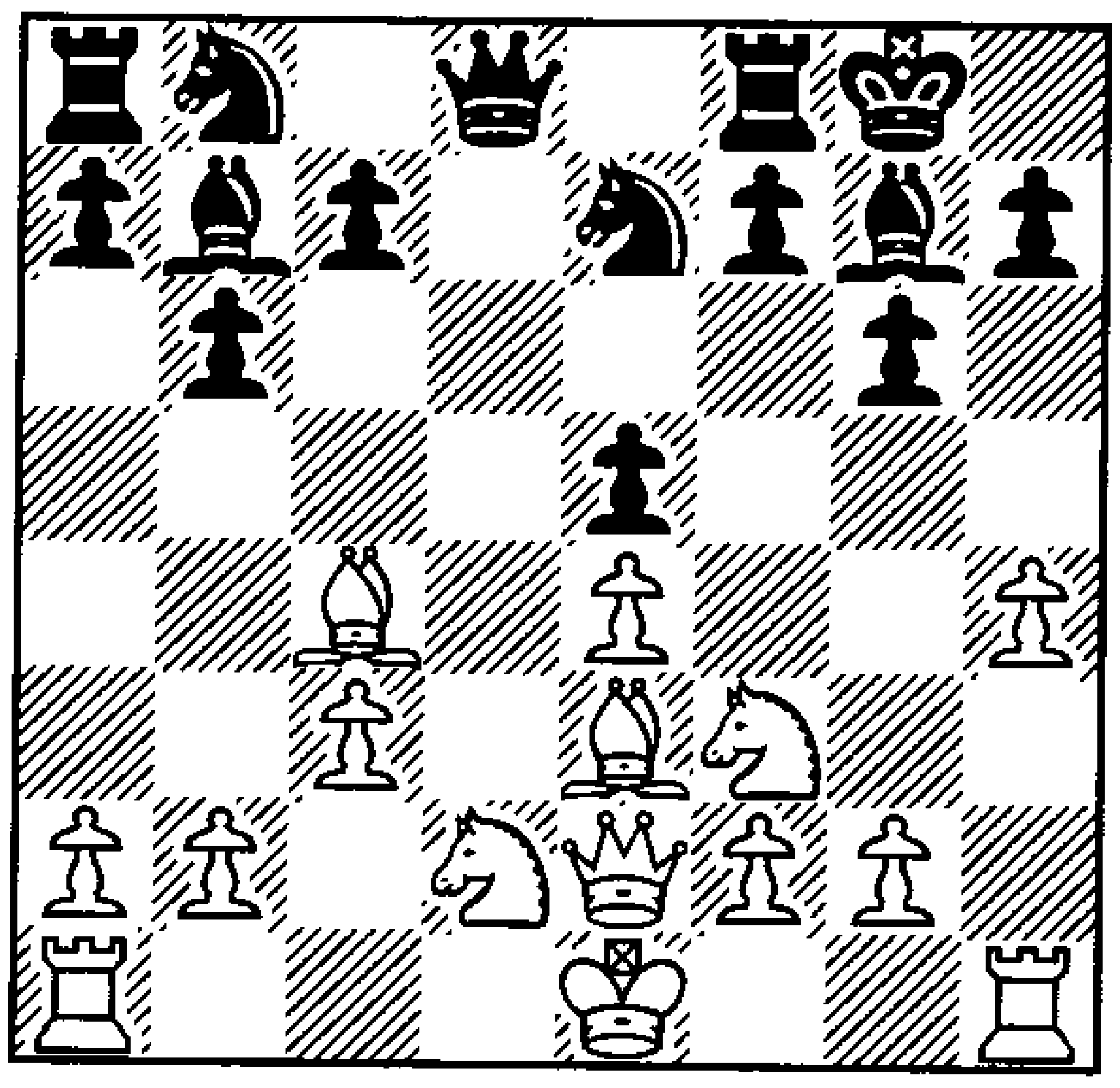


9 ♕e2?!

The commentators missed the typical sacrifice 9 ♗xf7+!, which immediately gives a decisive advantage: 9...♔xf7 10 ♕b3+ ♘d5 (10...♔e8 11 ♘g5) 11 ♘c4 ♖e8 12 0-0-0 c6 13 ♘a5 (computer play!). Why didn't Steinitz play this? I think that he *thought schematically*, and back on the seventh move he had *prepared a plan.*

9...0-0 10 h4!

A classic flank attack with a secure centre (the same theme will be seen in a game with Chigorin – *Game No.25*). 10 0-0-0 ♘d7 11 h4 is inaccurate in view of 11...♘f6.

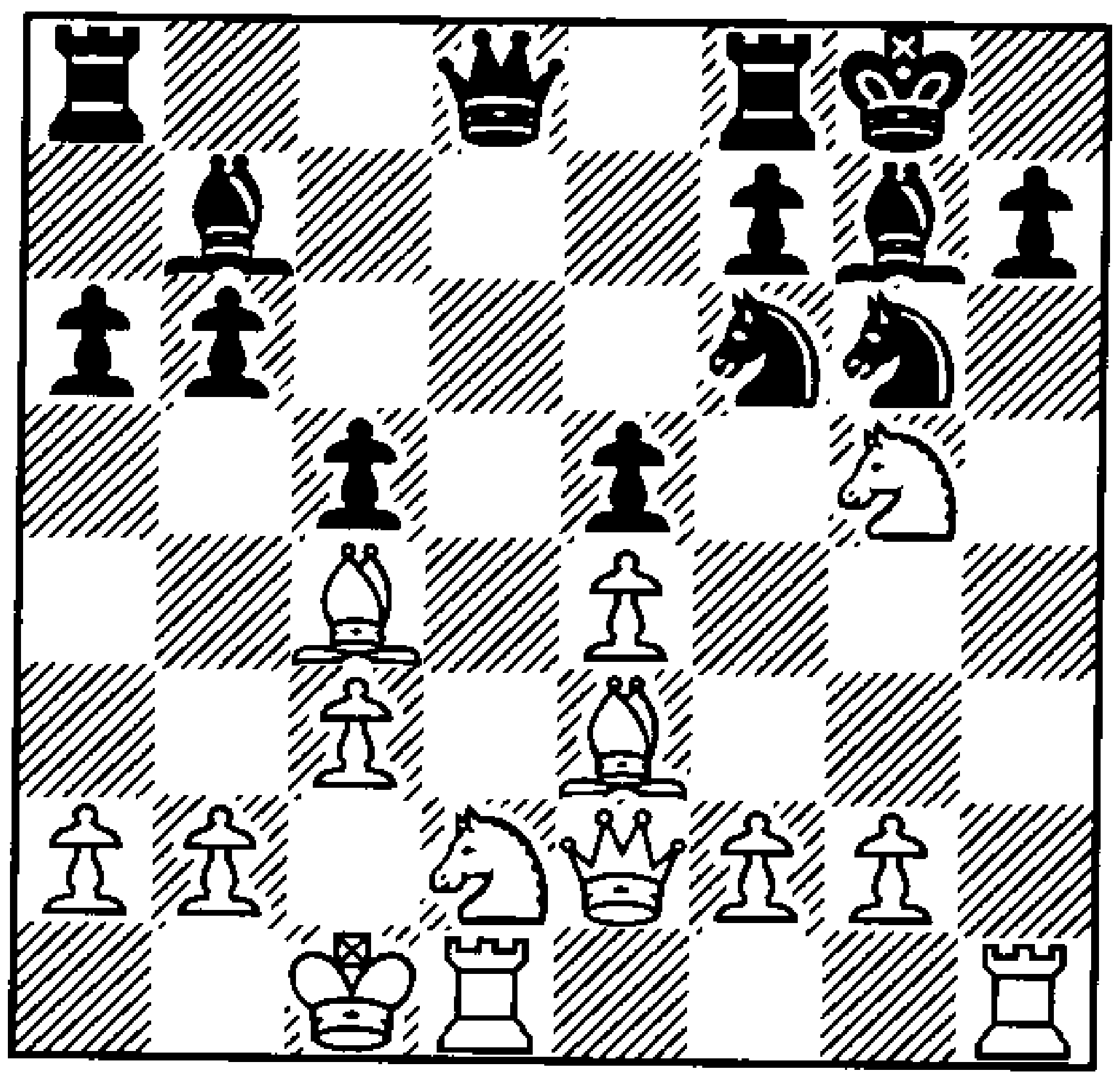


10...♘d7 (if 10...h5, then 11 ♘g5) **11 h5 c5 12 hxg6 ♘xg6**

An ugly move, but after 12...hxg6 13 ♘g5 ♘f6 14 0-0-0 ♕c7 Black also has a bad position, for example: 15 ♘df3 (also good is 15 ♖h4 ♘c6 16 ♖dh1 ♘a5 17 f3 ♘xc4 18 ♘xc4 ♖fd8 19 g4 ♔f8 20 ♕h2 ♘g8 21 ♖h7) 15...♘c6 16 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 17 ♘g5 ♖af8 18 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 19 ♕c4 ♘a5 20 ♖d8+ ♗f8 21 ♕e6! ♕e7 22 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 23 ♖h8+ ♔g7 24 ♕h3 and wins.

13 0-0-0 a6?! (13...♘f6) **14 ♘g5 ♘f6**

Not 14...h6 because of 15 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 16 ♕g4 etc.



15 ♘xh7!

Strictly according to his own teaching: a combination as the fruits of a positional advantage.

15...♘xh7 16 ♖xh7!?

'The right way! 16 ♕h5 also gave an advantage, but not a decisive one: 16...♘f6 17 ♕xg6 ♕c8 and then ...♕g4.' (Euwe) Naïve expectations: here White wins by both the quiet 18 ♖h4 and ♖dh1, and also the spectacular 18 ♖h7!! ♘xh7 19 ♗h6 forcing mate.

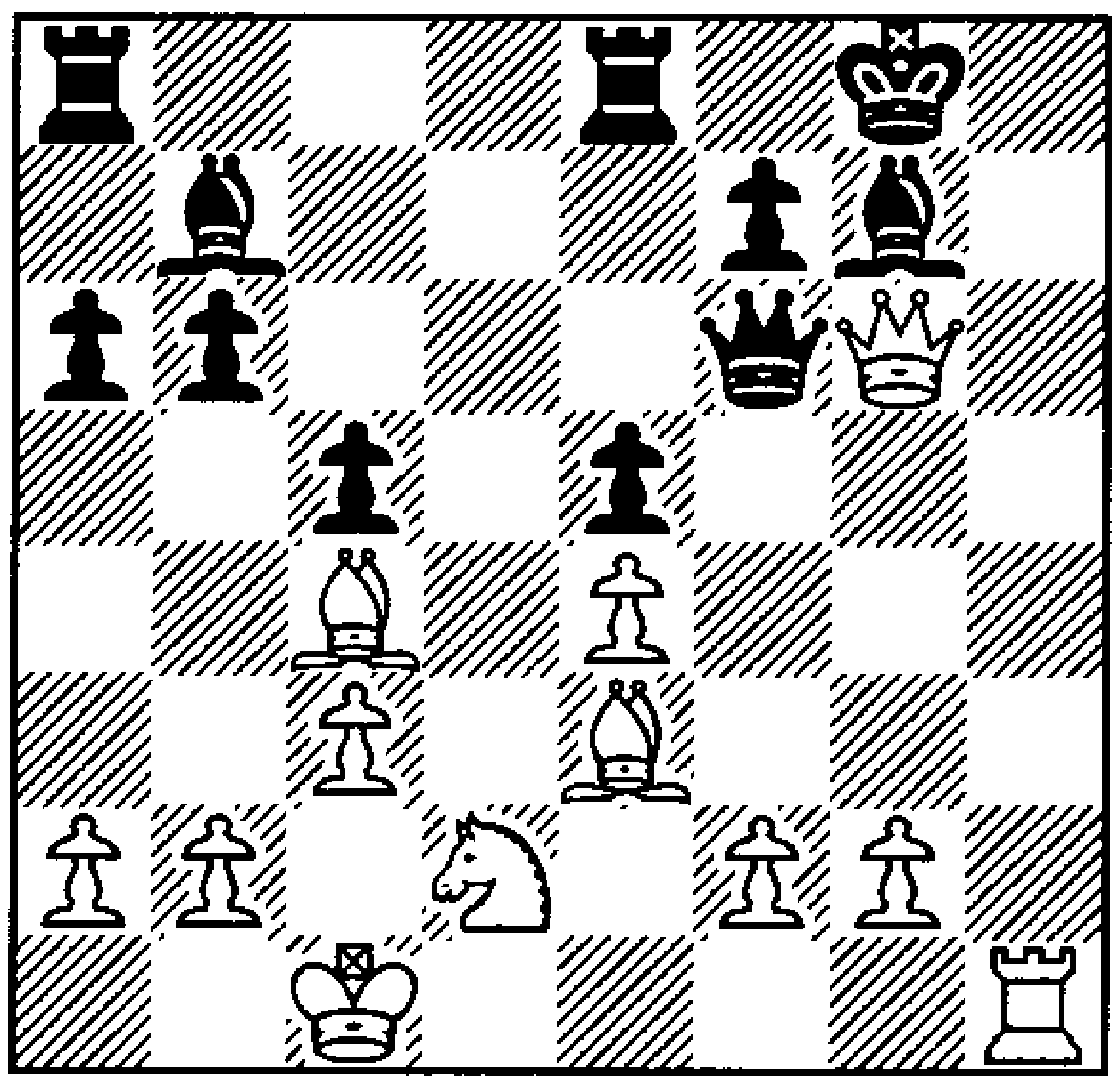
16...♔xh7

After the interposition of 16...b5 White decides matters by 17 ♖dh1 (or 17 ♕h5 immediately) 17...bxc4 18 ♕h5 ♖e8 19 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 20 ♕h6+ ♔g8 21 ♕h7+ (21 ♗xc5 ♖e7 22 ♘xc4 is also good) 21...♔f8 22 ♗h6+ ♔e7 23 ♗g5+.

17 ♕h5+ ♔g8 18 ♖h1

Also possible is 18 ♕xg6 ♕f6 19 ♕h5 b5 20 ♖h1 ♖fc8 21 ♗g5!

18...♖e8 19 ♕xg6 ♕f6



20 ♗xf7+! ♕xf7 (or 20...♔f8 21 ♗xe8 ♖xe8 22 ♖h8+ ♗xh8 23 ♗h6+ ♔e7 24 ♗g5) **21 ♖h8+ ♔xh8 22 ♕xf7** and White won

'The aggressive and inventive style of the Steinitz who had been raised in the German school of combination pleased the English amateurs, for they were able to learn a great deal from him just as, conversely, Steinitz did from their more solid play,' writes Lasker. 'From the imaginative, heroic temper of Anderssen's combinative style, the large-visioned, systematic position-play of the English School a synthesis arose in the mind of Steinitz, which was destined to make history... I fancy that one day he reflected how it could have come about that the magician Morphy beat the magician Anderssen. That a magician wins is obvious, but how can a magician lose? Also, how could a magician not lose if two magicians fight. Therefore, I fancy, Steinitz, by slow degrees, was led to believe that chess, after all, must be subject to a reason of its own not to be affected by invention, intuition, inspiration, genius, or anything else of the kind... Surely, Steinitz's heart beat when for the first time the thought came to him that the master should not look for winning combinations, unless he believed, unless he could prove to himself that he held an advantage...'

Bloodbath Number Four

Steinitz's striking match successes induced the English to organise his encounter with Anderssen, which can fully be regarded as the fourth in history, after the duels La Bourdonnais-McDonnell, Staunton-Saint-Amant and Morphy-Anderssen, to resemble a match for the world championship. And indeed, if ratings had existed then, the first six in the world rating list on 1 July 1866 would have looked like this: 1. Morphy, 2. Anderssen, 3. Paulsen (2nd prize-winner, London 1862), 4. Steinitz, 5. Kolisch, 6. Löwenthal. But since hopes of Morphy returning had died, any big match involving Anderssen effectively became a battle for the crown (roughly like the 1974 final candidates match Karpov-Korchnoi).

Play was to the first to win eight games, draws not counting (and there weren't any – not a single one!). Finally a time control appeared: two hours for every 20 moves. By present-day standards the prize fund was more than modest: 100 pounds sterling to the winner, and 20 to the loser. Curiously, for being late for play by more than 15 minutes a penalty of one guinea was imposed...

Staunton regarded Anderssen as the favourite and he wrote that 'Steinitz clearly overestimated his strength.' However, this was a fierce and dramatic battle between two worthy opponents, two fearless chess buccaneers.

Anderssen began with his favourite Evans Gambit and opened the score: 1-0. Steinitz replied with the even more audacious Salvio Gambit (1 e4 e5 2 f4 exf4 3 ♘f3 g5 4 ♗c4 g4 5 ♘e5 ♕h4+ 6 ♔f1 ♘h6 7 d4), and levelled the score: 1-1. Then Anderssen suddenly began to 'drift', losing twice with White in the Evans and again with Black in the Salvio. The score became 4-1 in Steinitz's favour!

In the sixth game Anderssen remembered about the Sicilian Defence and after 1 e4 c5 2 g3 ♘c6 3 ♗g2 e5 he won in a protracted struggle (which also occurred in the 12th). Greatly heartened, the 48-year-old German master scored a further three successive wins: twice with White in the Evans Gambit and finally with Black in the Salvio Gambit! And he again took the lead: 5-4. But Steinitz promptly gained his revenge in both gambits: 6-5! Then Anderssen again employed the Sicilian: 6-6.

Up till this point, as the commentators remarked, Steinitz was more like Anderssen than Anderssen himself! But in the 13th game his play clearly shows features of the future positional school.

Game 13

A.Anderssen-W.Steinitz

Match, London 1866, 13th game

Ruy Lopez C65

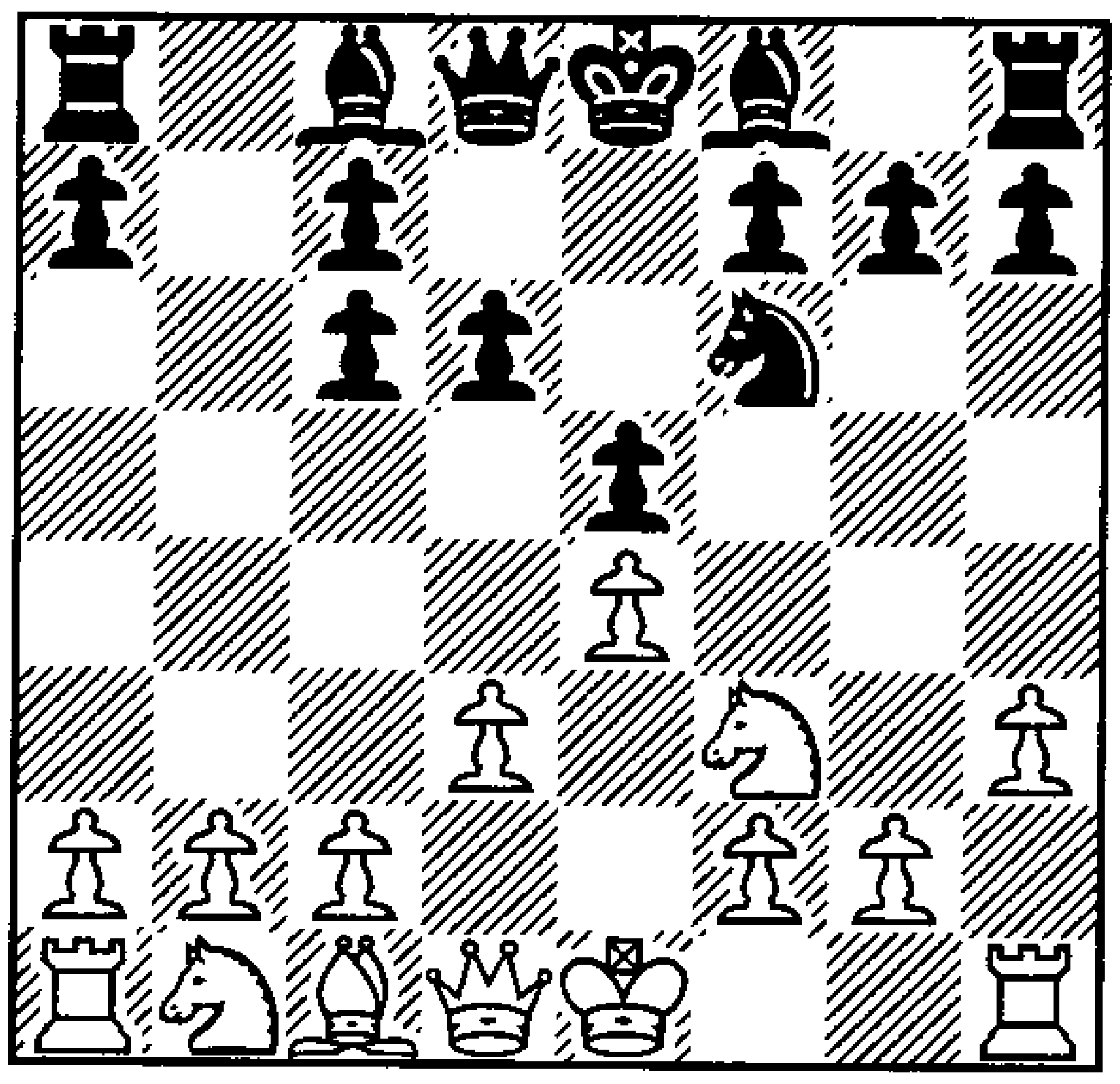
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 (refraining, for the first time in the match, from 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 b4!?) **3...♘f6 4 d3 d6 5 ♗xc6+?!**

This exchange is good in connection with d2-d4, but here 5 c3 is better.

5...bxc6 6 h3

'Loss of time incurred in order to prevent ...♗g4. Anderssen seems to have considered the knight stronger than the bishop, a valuation for which no motive can be adduced. The pawn move weakens the phalanx of the white kingside pawns as will be explained shortly. Perhaps this game was the historical event which caused Steinitz to conceive his theory of the phalanx.' (Lasker)

I should mention that the plan with ♗xc6 and h2-h3 is more justified in the Sicilian Defence (1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 d3 ♗g7 6 h3) and, with colours reversed, in the English Opening – there the arrangement of the pawns is different and it is important to retain the knight at f3 (f6).



6...g6!

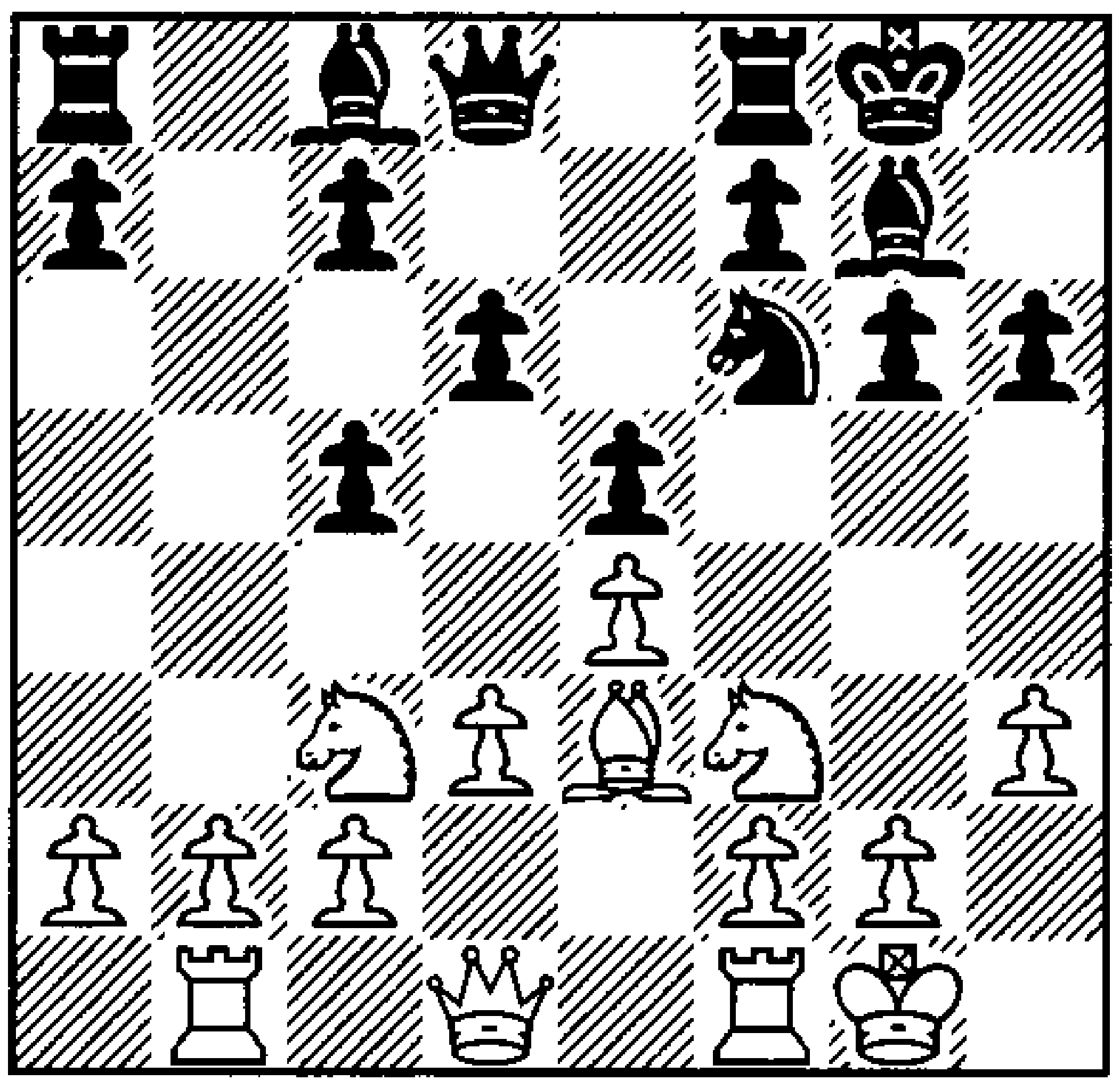
'Preparation for an assault by a mass of pawns as taught by Philidor. For this purpose it is essential to maintain many obstructions in the centre. The bishop which aides the centre from g7 is there well placed.' (Lasker)

7 ♘c3 ♗g7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♗g5?!

A new, but unsuccessful move. The two players obviously remembered the Anderssen-Paulsen match (London 1862), the fifth game of which went 9 ♘e2 c5 10 ♘g3 ♗b7 11 b3 (in the seventh game White preferred 11 ♖e1 ♘d7?! 12 ♖b1 f5 13 b4) 11...♘e8 12 ♖b1 ♕e7 13 ♖e1 f5 14 b4 cxb4 15 ♖xb4 c5 16 ♖b1 f4 17 ♘f1 ♗c8 18 c3 ♕f6 19 d4 with a protracted and double-edged struggle.

9...h6 10 ♗e3 c5 (solidifying the centre) **11 ♖b1**

Anderssen remains true to an approved plan. After 11 a3 Black has the reply 11...a5, or 11 ♘h2 ♘h5 12 ♕d2 ♔h7, and if 13 g4, then 13...♘f4 14 ♗xf4 exf4 15 ♕xf4 f5 with excellent play for the pawn. Lasker suggested 11 ♕d2 ♔h7 12 g4?!, but after 12...♘g8! and ...f7-f5 White runs into difficulties.

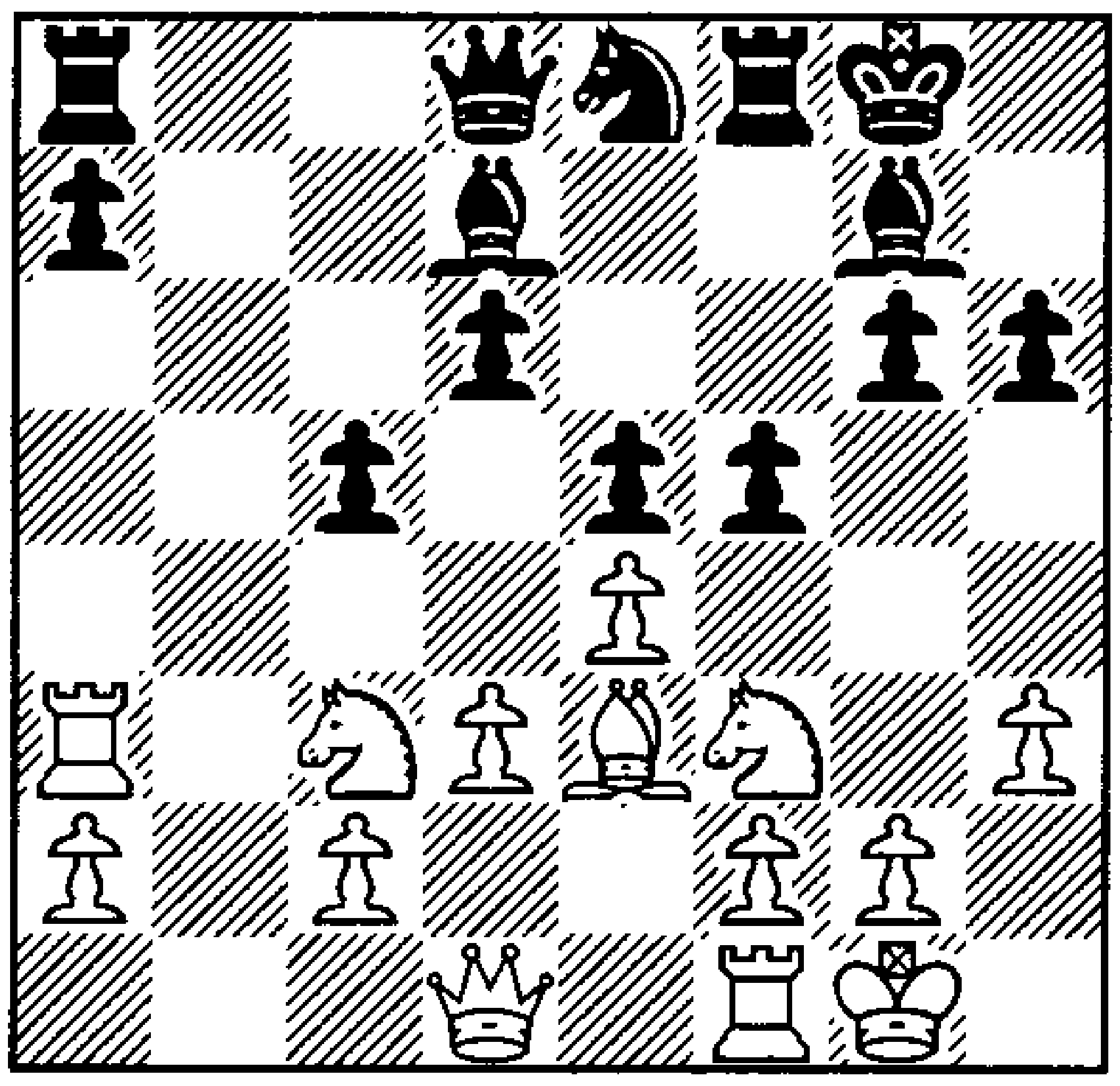


11...♘e8! (making way for the f-pawn) **12 b4 cxb4 13 ♖xb4 c5 14 ♖a4**

A dangerous rook journey; 14 ♖b2 f5 15 ♘d5 ♘f6 etc. was a quieter alternative.

14...♗d7 15 ♖a3 f5

'The phalanx marches.' (Lasker)

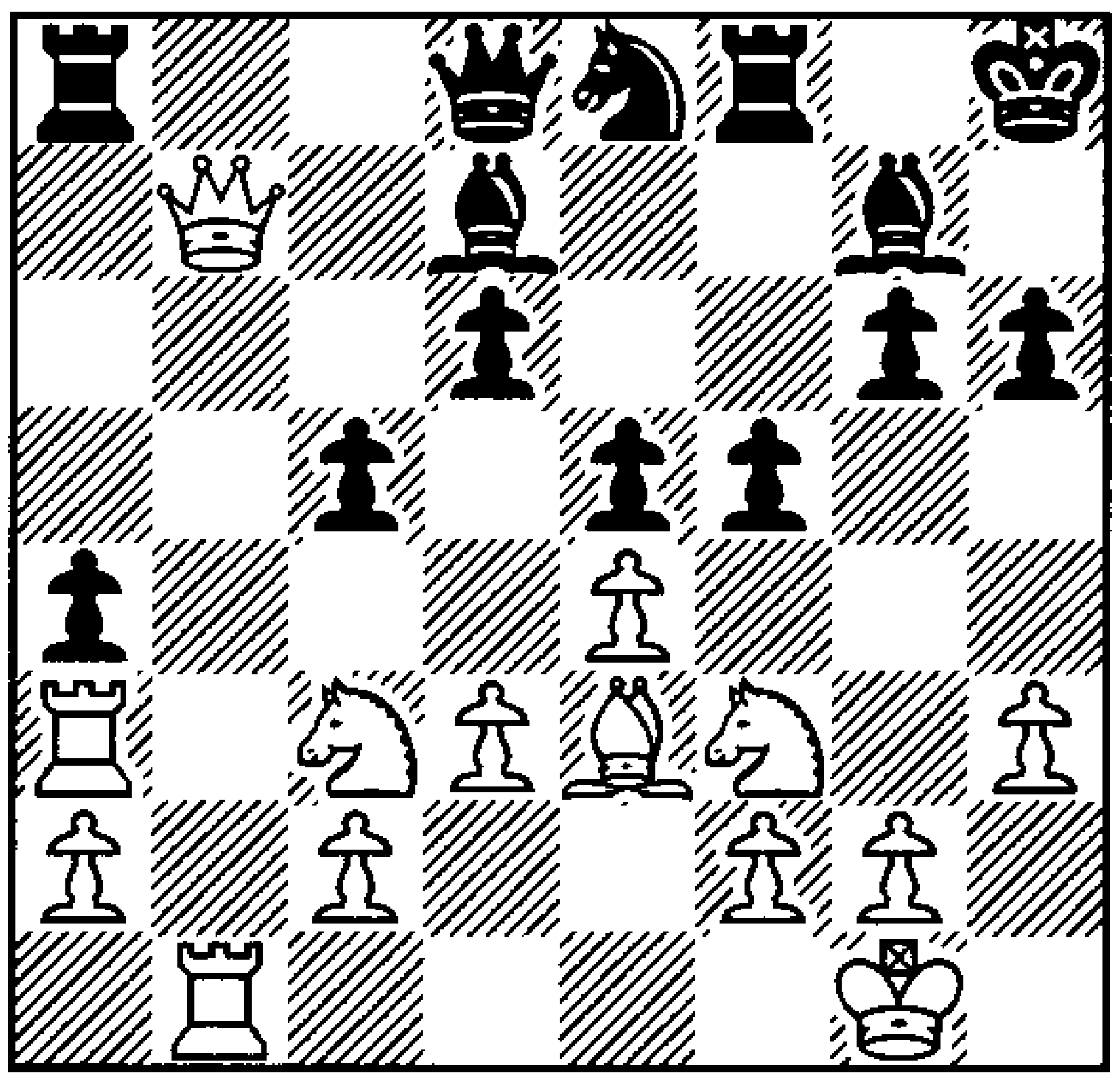


16 ♕b1?! (16 ♘d5 is correct, and if 16...f4 17 ♗d2 g5, then 18 ♘h2) **16...♔h8?!**

The commentators were perplexed as to why Steinitz avoided winning a pawn – 16...fxe4!? 17 ♘xe4 (17 dxe4 ♗xh3) 17...♗xh3. Neishtadt suggested that in the event of 18 ♕b3+ ♔h8 (inferior is 18...c4?! 19 dxc4 ♖xf3 20 gxf3 ♗xf1 21 ♔xf1) 19 ♕b7?! 'things are not so simple', but after 19...♖xf3! the computer does not see any compensation for the material deficit. Evidently better is 19 ♘xe5 (but not 19 ♘fg5?! c4! 20 ♕b7 ♗d7) 19...♗xe5 20 gxh3 ♕c8 21 ♔g2 (21 d4?! c4 22 ♕c3 ♗g7) with hopes of equalising.

But if Black really didn't want to allow his opponent counter-chances, 16...♘c7 was more logical, since 17 ♕b7? is not possible on account of 17...♖b8 18 ♕xa7 ♖a8.

17 ♕b7 a5 18 ♖b1 (18 ♖b3!?) **18...a4**



19 ♕d5?!

White sounds the retreat. 19 ♘d5 was more consistent, for example:

1) 19...fxe4?! 20 dxe4 ♗xh3?, and here Neishtadt recommended 21 gxh3 ♖xf3 22 ♗xc5, although the spectacular inclusion of the a3-rook is much stronger after 21 ♗g5! hxg5 (21...♕c8 22 ♘h4!) 22 ♘xe5! (with the threats of ♘xg6+ and ♖xh3+) 22...♗e6 23 ♘xg6+ ♔g8 24 ♘de7+ ♔f7 25 ♘xf8 ♔xf8 26 ♘c6 ♕c8 27 ♖f3+ ♗f6 28 ♕e7+;

2) 19...♘f6 (seemingly the most natural) 20 ♗xc5!? (in the style of the 'old' Anderssen!) 20...♘xd5 (20...dxc5 21 ♘xe5 ♗e8 22 ♘f4!) 21 ♗xd6 fxe4 22 dxe4 ♘f4 23 ♘xe5 ♗e6 24 ♗xf8 ♕xf8 25 ♘d3 with sharp play;

3) 19...♗e6 20 ♘e7 ♔h7 21 ♘c6 (but not 21 ♘h4?! f4 22 ♗d2 ♖f7 23 ♘hxg6 ♘c7) 21...♕c8 22 ♘a7, and since 22...♕xb7 23 ♖xb7 fxe4 24 dxe4 ♘f6 25 ♘d2 is unfavourable for Black, he has to play 22...♕d8 with equal chances.

19...♕c8 20 ♖b6 ♖a7 21 ♔h2

Everyone considered this prophylactic move to be a serious mistake. They recommended 21 exf5 (incorrect is 21 ♖xd6? ♘xd6 22 ♕xd6 f4) 21...gxf5 22 ♗d2 with the idea of 22...♖g8 (22...f4 23 ♘h2!) 23 ♕c4 f4 24 ♘b5, but after 22...♕c7! White's position is worse. Apparently if 21 ♕c4!? Anderssen was afraid of the attack 21...f4 (21...♗e6 22 ♘d5) 22 ♗d2 ♗xh3!? 23 gxh3 ♕xh3, although after 24 ♘e1 f3 25 ♘d5 Black has no more than a draw.

21...f4 22 ♗d2 g5 23 ♕c4 ♕d8 24 ♖b1?

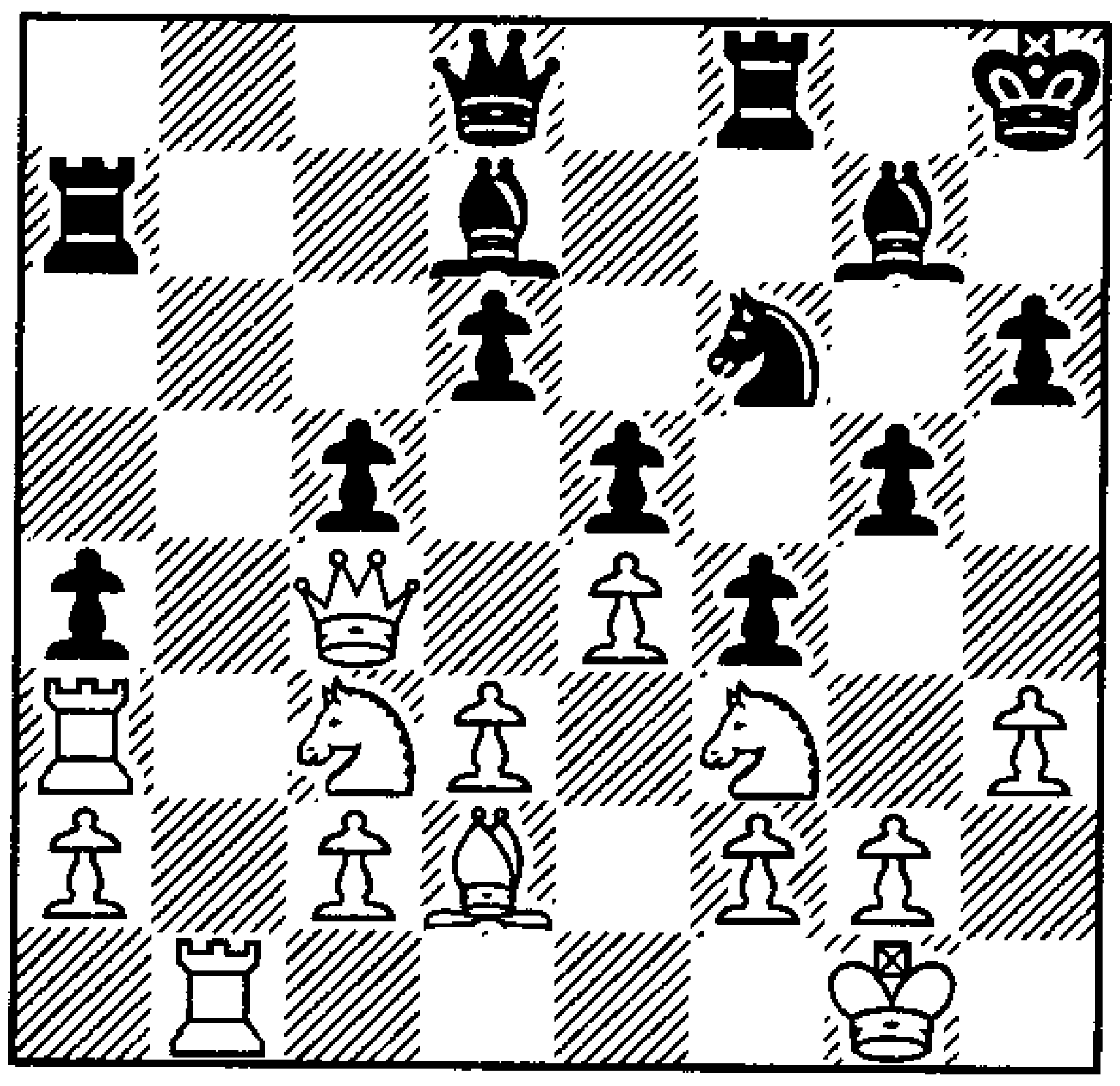
But this really is a mistake. 24 ♘d5! was much more energetic, with possibilities of active counterplay: 24...h5 25 ♖a6! ♖xa6 26 ♕xa6 g4 27 ♗a5! (diverting the queen) 27...♕b8 28 ♘h4 ♔h7 29 ♕b6 (29 ♘b6 ♗e6) 29...♕a8 30 ♕d8.

24...♘f6?!

If 24...h5 the paradoxical 25 h4! gxh4 26 ♘b5 ♖a6 27 ♘c3 ♘c7 28 ♘d5 is unclear. However, it was worth covering the b5-square by 24...♘c7! – after this it is hard for White to do anything to oppose the imminent storming of his king's fortress.

25 ♔g1?!

Of course, not 25 ♘xa4? ♕e8 (or 25...♕e7 and ...♖fa8), but after 25 ♘b5! there would still have been all to play for.



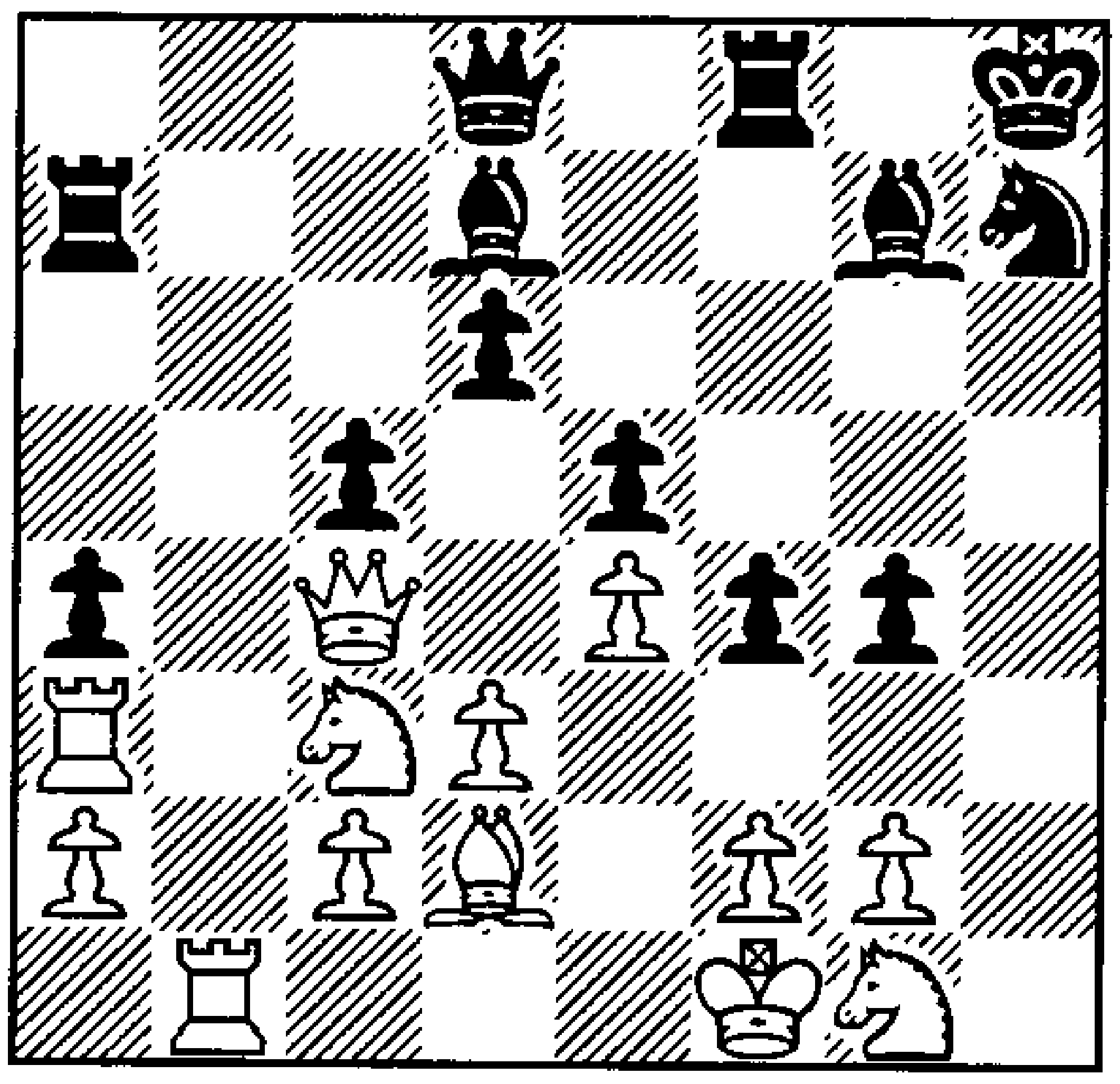
25...♘h7

'The g-pawn having been protected, the phalanx can set itself into motion.' (Lasker)

26 ♔f1 (26 ♘b5!? ♕b8 27 ♘c3) **26...h5 27 ♘g1?**

Probably the decisive error. After 27 ♘b5! nothing terrible for White is apparent: 27...♖a6 28 ♘c7 ♖a7 29 ♘e6 etc.

27...g4 28 hxg4 hxg4



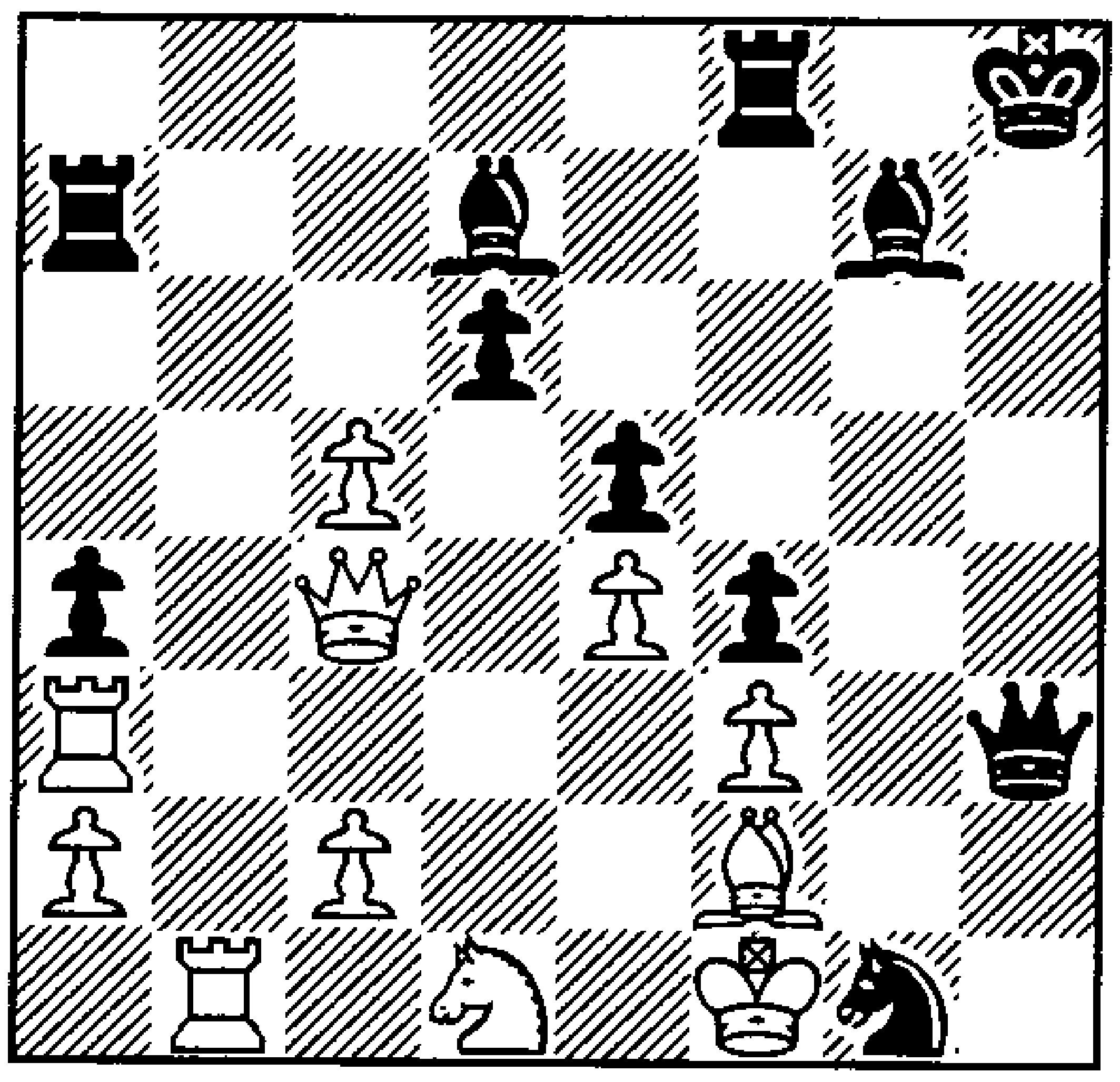
29 f3? (this merely strengthens the enemy attack) **29...♕h4 30 ♘d1 ♘g5**

'The pieces post themselves behind the phalanx menacingly. Soon the lines will be opened, which will allow the major pieces to approach the white king (Lasker).' Virtually a model of the modern King's Indian Defence!

31 ♗e1 ♕h7 32 d4 (desperation!) **32...gxf3 33 gxf3 ♘h3!?** (33...cxd4 was a more prosaic way to win) **34 ♗f2**

Or 34 dxc5 ♘xg1 35 ♔xg1 ♕g6+ 36 ♔f2 ♗h3 37 ♗b4 dxc5 38 ♗xc5 ♖c7 and wins.

34...♘xg1 35 dxc5 ♕h3+



36 ♔e1 (36 ♔xg1? ♖g8) **36...♘xf3+ 37 ♖xf3 ♕xf3 38 ♘c3 dxc5 39 ♗xc5 ♖c7 40 ♘d5 ♖xc5 41 ♕xc5 ♕xe4+ 42 ♔f2 ♖c8 43 ♘c7 ♕e3+ 0-1**

'One recognizes in the above game a trend in the style of Steinitz towards Philidor and away from La Bourdonnais. The theory of Steinitz approached that of Philidor as soon as he examined the minute advantages that *endure*.... Small disadvantages appertaining to the position of pawns are difficult to repair and have a tendency to last.' (Lasker)

Declining the King's Gambit did not help Anderssen in the 14th game, and this 'bloody' match ended with a score of 8-6 in Steinitz's favour.

However, the chess world was not in a hurry to recognise him as champion. Firstly, the undefeated Morphy was still alive. When in the autumn of 1866 Steinitz won with difficulty a match against Henry Bird (+7 -5 =5), the latter remarked that Morphy (who had smashed Bird by a score of +10 -1 =1) would be able to give the 'modern Calabrese' odds of a pawn and move! Such a comment is not forgotten: afterwards Steinitz crushed Bird every time for many years...

Secondly, Steinitz was not able to demonstrate his superiority in the next few tournaments: in Paris 1867 he was third after Kolisch and Winawer, in Dundee he was second after Neumann, and in Baden-Baden 1870 he was second after Anderssen, to whom he lost both games.

The Birth of a New School

At that time the future world champion invented an ultra-sharp opening, which became known in theory as the 'Steinitz Gambit'. In it were oddly interwoven both the attacking ideas of the masters of the old school, who often left their king in the centre, and the first dawning of the future new school. Steinitz put forward an original thesis (true, as it later transpired, it did not hold for all positions, by any means): 'If necessary precautionary measures are taken, the king can defend itself... For an attack the opponent has to advance his pawns, and in the event of an unsuccessful offensive the pawns will prove weak.'

Of the many games played by Steinitz with his gambit, the most complete impression is made by the following – with Louis Paulsen, one of the leading masters of that era, who Steinitz rated highly and belonged to the 'pioneers of the modern school'. In this game he convincingly demonstrated his superiority in the evaluation of positional factors – both temporary and long-term.

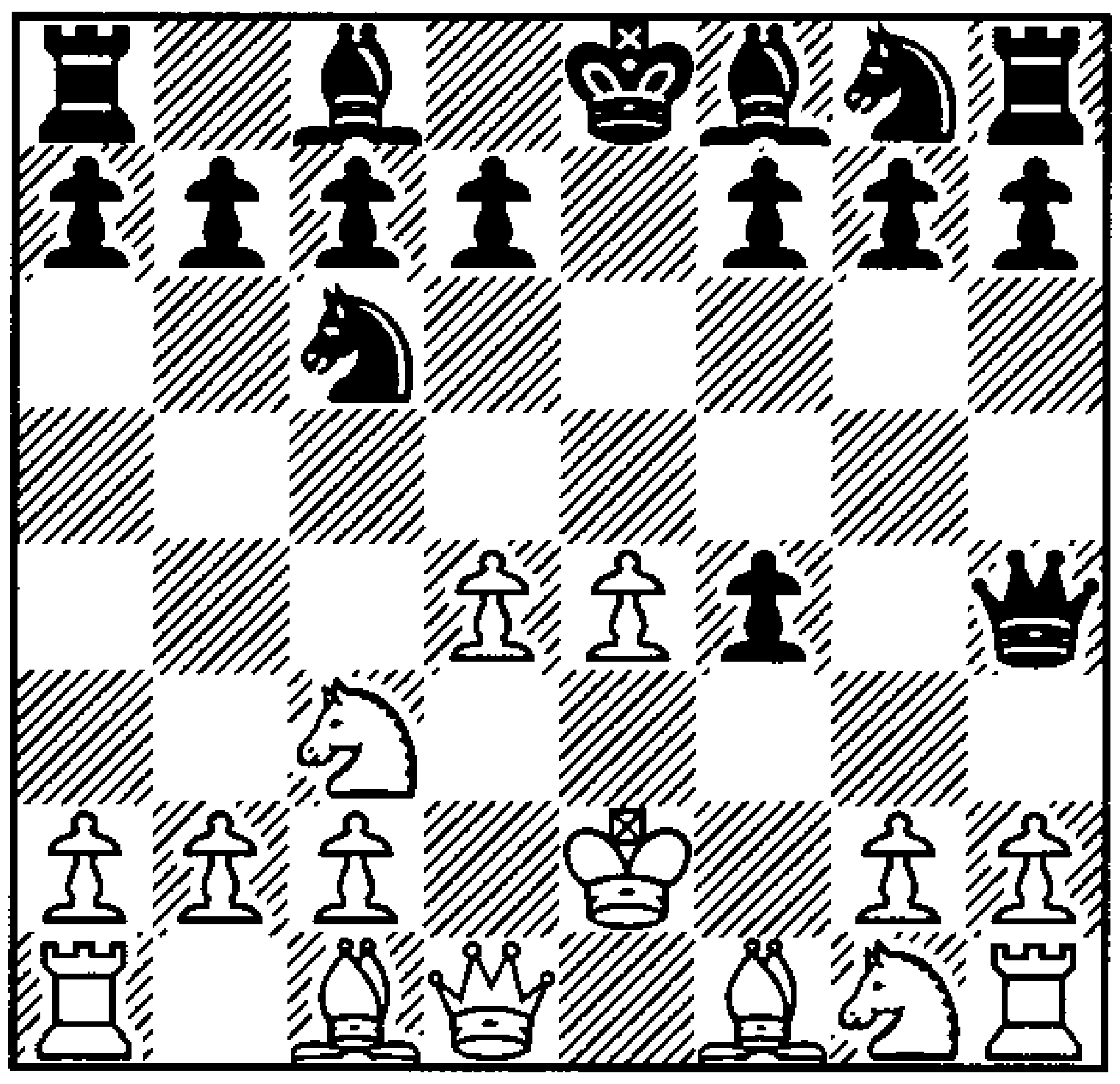
Game 14

W.Steinitz-L.Paulsen

Baden-Baden 1870

Vienna Game C25

1 e4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 f4 exf4 4 d4?! ♛h4+ 5 ♔e2



Such boldness by the king is a nonsense in modern-day chess. The idea of this audacious gambit was evoked by a game with Hamppe (Vienna 1859): 1 e4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 f4 d5 4 exd5 ♘xd5 5 fxe5 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♛h4+ 7 ♔e2 ♝g4+ 8 ♘f3 ♘c6 9 d4 0-0-0 with advantage to Black – Steinitz.

Since the king interferes with the development of its own pieces, it would seem that Black should automatically obtain a good game. However, Steinitz thought that in the given position long-term factors were more important than temporary inconveniences. White's plan is to drive back the queen with gain of tempo and to prepare an attack under the cover of his strong pawn centre, at the same hindering Black's harmonious development. The first world champion's contemporaries were not in fact able to find a prescription against his revolutionary strategy of accumulating small advantages, and it was only much later that doubts were cast on this gambit.

When in 1883 Morphy was informed that Steinitz was in New Orleans, he is said to have replied: 'I know... His gambit is bad.' The great chess recluse was not let down by his intuition! But to disclose the vulnerability of the white king in the centre and to refute the gambit, it was precisely Morphy's genius that was lacking. Perhaps in this there was some historical chess sense – the elemental pioneer had departed, making way for the philosopher: the time had come to formulate new principles...

5...d6

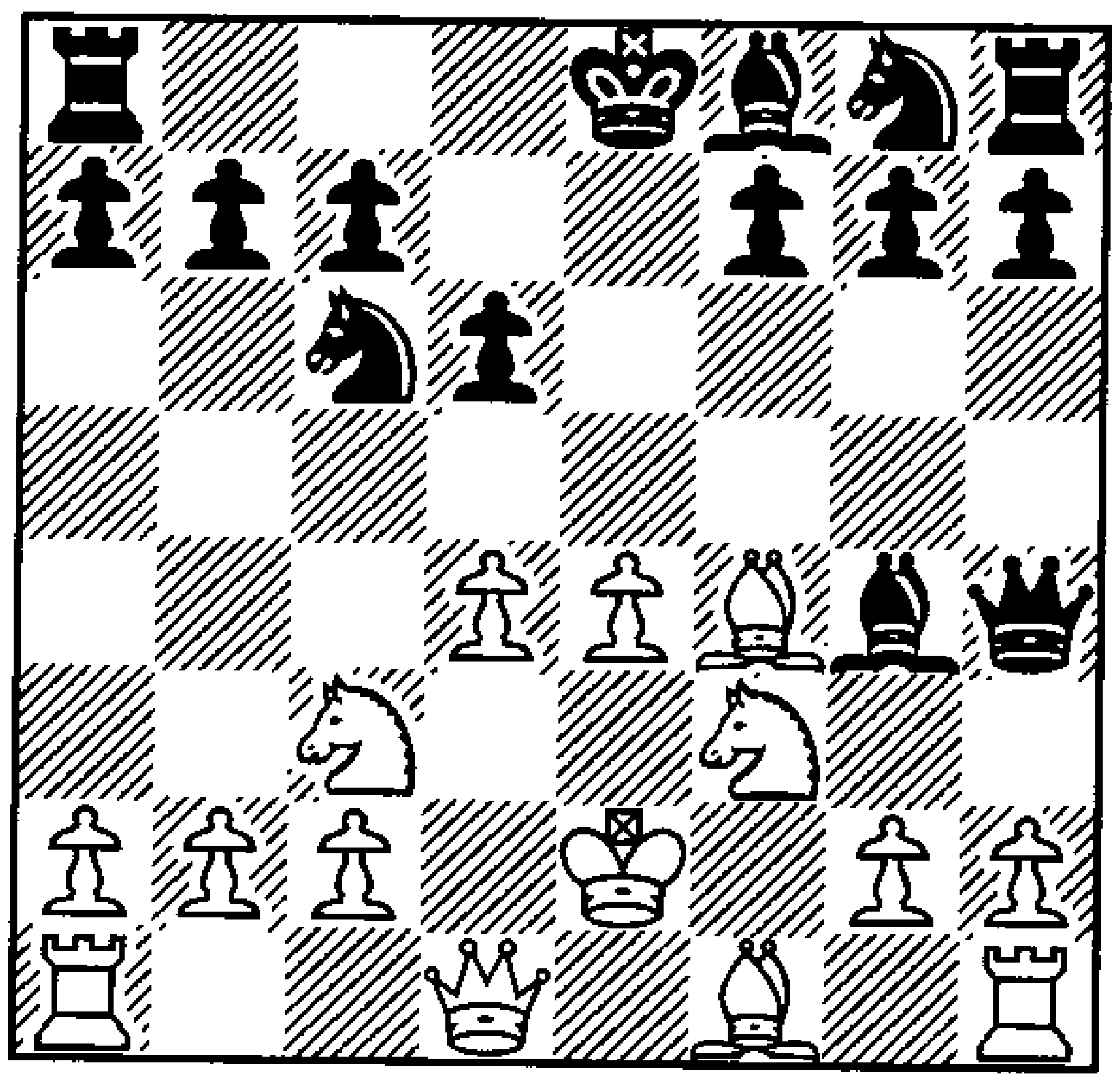
The most solid. In Steinitz's games there also occurred both 5...♕h5+ 6 ♘f3 g5 7 ♘d5!, and 5...b6 6 ♘b5 (according to Chigorin, 6 ♕d2! ♗a6+ 7 ♔d1 ♗xf1 8 ♘f3 ♕h5 9 ♖xf1 is better) 6...♗a6 7 a4, and also 5...♘f6 6 ♘f3 ♕g4 7 d5 ♘e5 8 h3 ♕h5 9 ♗xf4 ♘xf3 10 gxf3 d6 11 ♔d2 ♕h4 12 ♗e3 with advantage to White (Chigorin-Steinitz, Havana 21st matchgame 1892).

The central counter 5...d5!? is met by 6 exd5 which leads to wild complications, for example:

1) 6...♕e7+ 7 ♔f2 ♕h4+ 8 g3! fxg3+ 9 ♔g2 ♗d6 10 ♕e1+! ♘ce7 11 hxg3 ♕xd4 (Steinitz-Chigorin, London 1883) 12 ♘f3! with advantage, or 9...♘xd4? (an unsuccessful novelty: Black suddenly finds himself behind in development) 10 hxg3 ♕g4 11 ♕e1+ ♗e7 12 ♗d3 (threatening 13 ♖h4) 12...♘f5 (12...♔d8 13 ♘e4) 13 ♘f3 ♗d7 14 ♗f4 f6 15 ♘e4 ♘gh6 16 ♗xh6 ♘xh6 17 ♖xh6 gxh6 18 ♘xf6+ ♔f7 19 ♘xg4 and White won (Steinitz-Zukertort, USA 20th matchgame 1886) – this win brought Steinitz the official title of world champion!

2) 6...♗g4+!? 7 ♘f3 0-0-0 (7...♗xf3+!? 8 gxf3 ♕e7+) 8 dxc6 ♗c5 9 cxb7+ (9 ♕e1!? ♕h5! 10 cxb7+ ♔b8 Steinitz-Liverpool Chess Club 1898/99) 9...♔b8 10 ♘b5 ♘f6 11 ♔d3 ♕h5 (11...♗f5+ 12 ♔c3 ♘e4+ 13 ♔b3 ♕f6 14 ♕e1 is unclear) 12 ♔c3 ♗xd4+? (12...a6! is correct) 13 ♘bxd4 ♕c5+ 14 ♔b3 ♕b6+ 15 ♗b5 ♗xf3 16 ♕xf3 ♖xd4 17 ♕c6 ♕a5 18 c3 and White won (Steinitz-Zukertort, London match 1872).

6 ♘f3 ♗g4 7 ♗xf4



7...0-0-0

The stem game Steinitz-Neumann (Dundee 1867) went 7...♗xf3+ 8 ♔xf3 ♘ge7 (8...♘f6 9 ♗b5!; 8...g5!?) 9 ♗e2 0-0-0 10 ♗e3 ♕f6+ 11 ♔g3 d5 12 ♗g4+ ♔b8 13 e5 ♕g6 14 ♔f2 h5 15 ♗h3! f6 16 exf6 ♕xf6+ 17 ♕f3 ♕xf3+ 18 gxf3! g6 19 ♘e2! ♘f5?! 20 ♗xf5 gxf5 21 c3 ♗d6 22 ♗f4! and White won.

In Baden-Baden against Rosenthal, Steinitz tried the tempting 8 gxf3?! ♕xf4 9 ♘d5, and after 9...♕h6? (correct was 9...♕h4! 10 ♘xc7+ ♔d8 11 ♘xa8 ♔c8 12 d5 ♘e5 13 ♕d4 ♔b8 and if 14 ♕c3 ♕d8!) 10 ♘xc7+ ♔d8 11 ♘xa8 ♔c8 12 d5 ♘f6 (12...♘e5 13 ♕d4 ♔b8 14 ♕c3!, and the knight at a8 is rescued) 13 dxc6 d5 14 ♕d4 ♗d6 15 ♕xa7 bxc6 16 ♖e1 ♖e8 17 ♔d1! dxe4 18 ♖xe4! ♖xe4 (18...♘xe4? 19 ♘b6+ and ♕d7 mate) 19 fxe4 ♕f4 20 ♗h3+ ♔d8 21 ♖f1 ♕xe4 22 ♕b6+ ♔e8 23 ♖e1 and Black resigned.

Perhaps the most logical is 7...f5! (E. Schmidt, 1895), for example:

1) 8 exf5 (no better is 8 ♘d5 0-0-0, or 8 h3 fxe4! 9 ♘xe4 ♕e7 10 hxg4 ♕xe4+ 11 ♗e3 ♘f6) 8...0-0-0 9 ♗g3 ♗xf3+ 10 ♔xf3 ♘xd4+ 11 ♔f2 ♕f6;

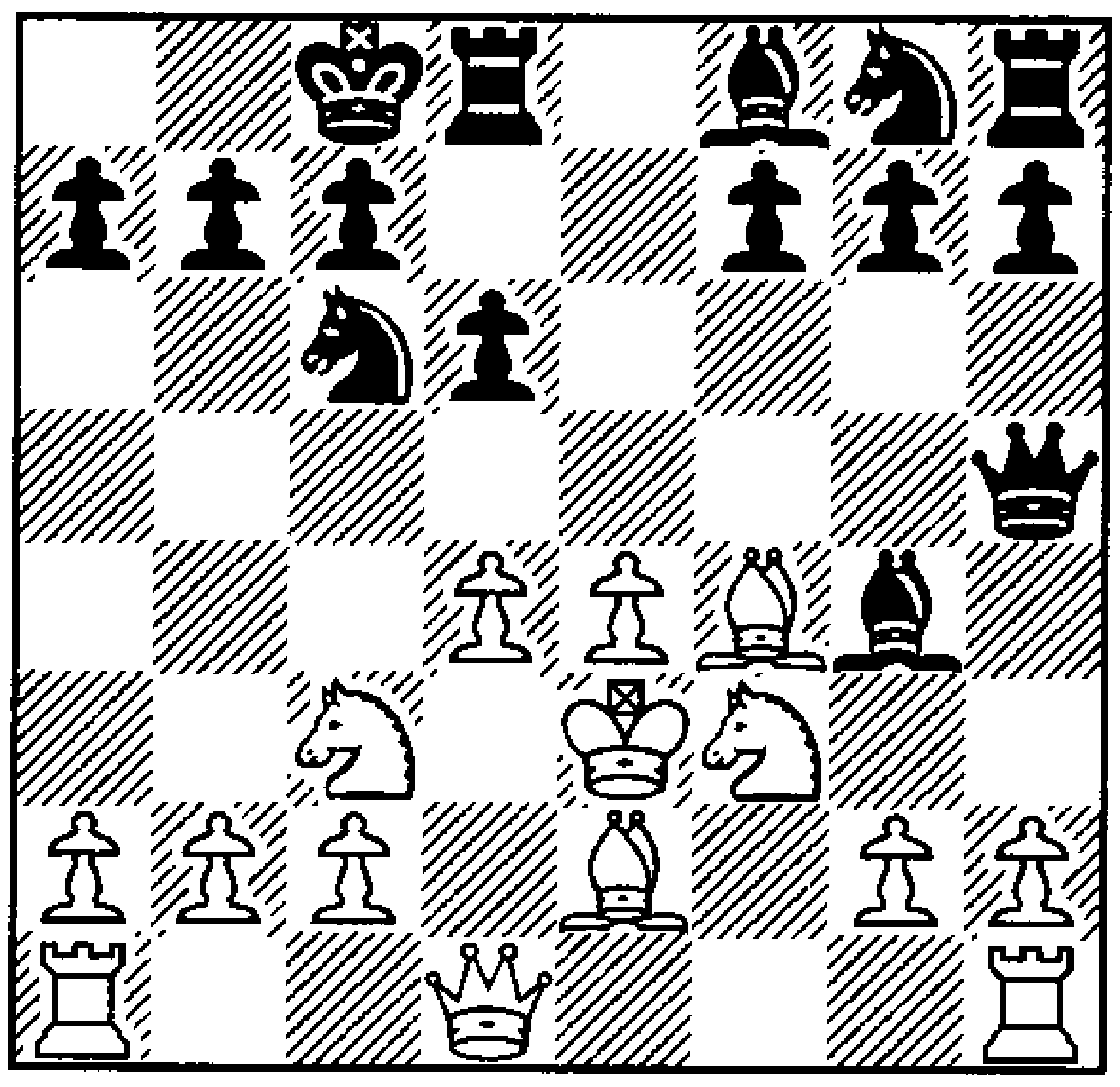
2) 8 d5 ♘e5 9 ♗xe5 dxe5 10 g3 ♕h5 11 ♗g2 ♘f6!, or 9 ♔e3 ♗xf3 10 gxf3 g5! 11 ♗xe5 dxe5 12 ♕d3 ♗c5+;

3) 8 e5 ♗xf3+ 9 ♔xf3 ♕g4+ 10 ♔e3 dxe5! 11 ♕xg4 (11 ♗xe5? ♘xe5 12 dxe5 ♗c5+) 11...exd4+ 12 ♔d3 fxg4;

4) 8 ♔e3 ♕e7 (8...♗xf3!? 9 ♔xf3 g5) 9 ♗d3 ♘f6 10 ♗g5 0-0-0;

5) 8 ♕d2 ♘f6 9 exf5 0-0-0 10 g3 ♕h5 11 ♗g2 d5 12 h3 ♗xf5 13 g4 ♕g6 14 ♘h4 ♕e8+ 15 ♔f2 ♗e4 – as in all the preceding variations, Black has an excellent game (Averbakh-Trifunovic, USSR-Yugoslavia match 1963).

8 ♔e3 ♕h5 (8...♗xf3 9 ♕xf3 f5 10 d5 ♘ce7 11 ♔d2 fxe4 12 ♘xe4 favours White, Steinitz-Winawer, London 1883, but 8...♕e7!? 9 ♔f2 f5 10 exf5 ♕d7 is interesting) **9 ♗e2**



9...♕a5?

Fearing 10 h3, Black loses a highly important tempo. The modern ways of playing this position are the standard 9...f5 10 h3 (10 ♘g5?! ♘f6 11 ♔d3 fxe4+ Caldwell-Bisguier, New York 1987) 10...♗xf3 11 ♗xf3 ♕e8 12 ♔f2 fxe4 with gradual equality, and the sharp 9...g5! 10 ♘xg5 ♘f6! (I am sure that Morphy would not have neglected such ideas!) 11 h3 ♗xe2 12 ♕xe2 ♕g6 13 d5 ♘e5 14 ♘f3 ♗h6! with excellent compensation for the pawn (Barle-Portisch, Portoroz/Ljubljana 1975).

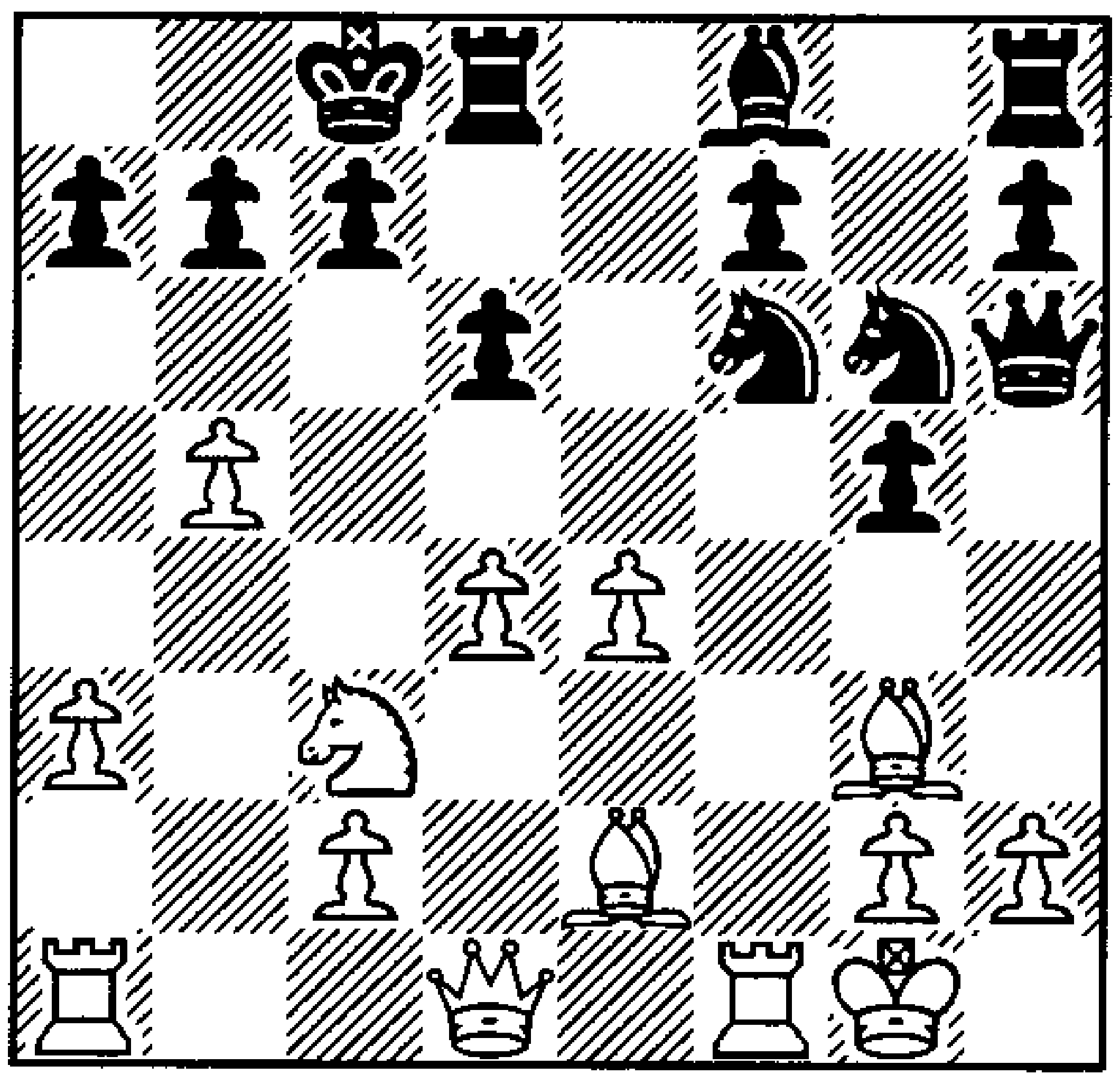
10 a3! (it turns out that the queen is also uncomfortable on the queenside) **10...♗xf3 11 ♔xf3!**

The right way! Paulsen was hoping for 11 ♗xf3 g5! 12 ♗g3 ♗g7 with counterplay.

11...♕h5+ (now 11...g5? is bad on account of 12 b4 ♕b6 13 ♗e3 with the threats of d4-d5, ♘d5 or ♘a4) **12 ♔e3 ♕h4 13 b4!**

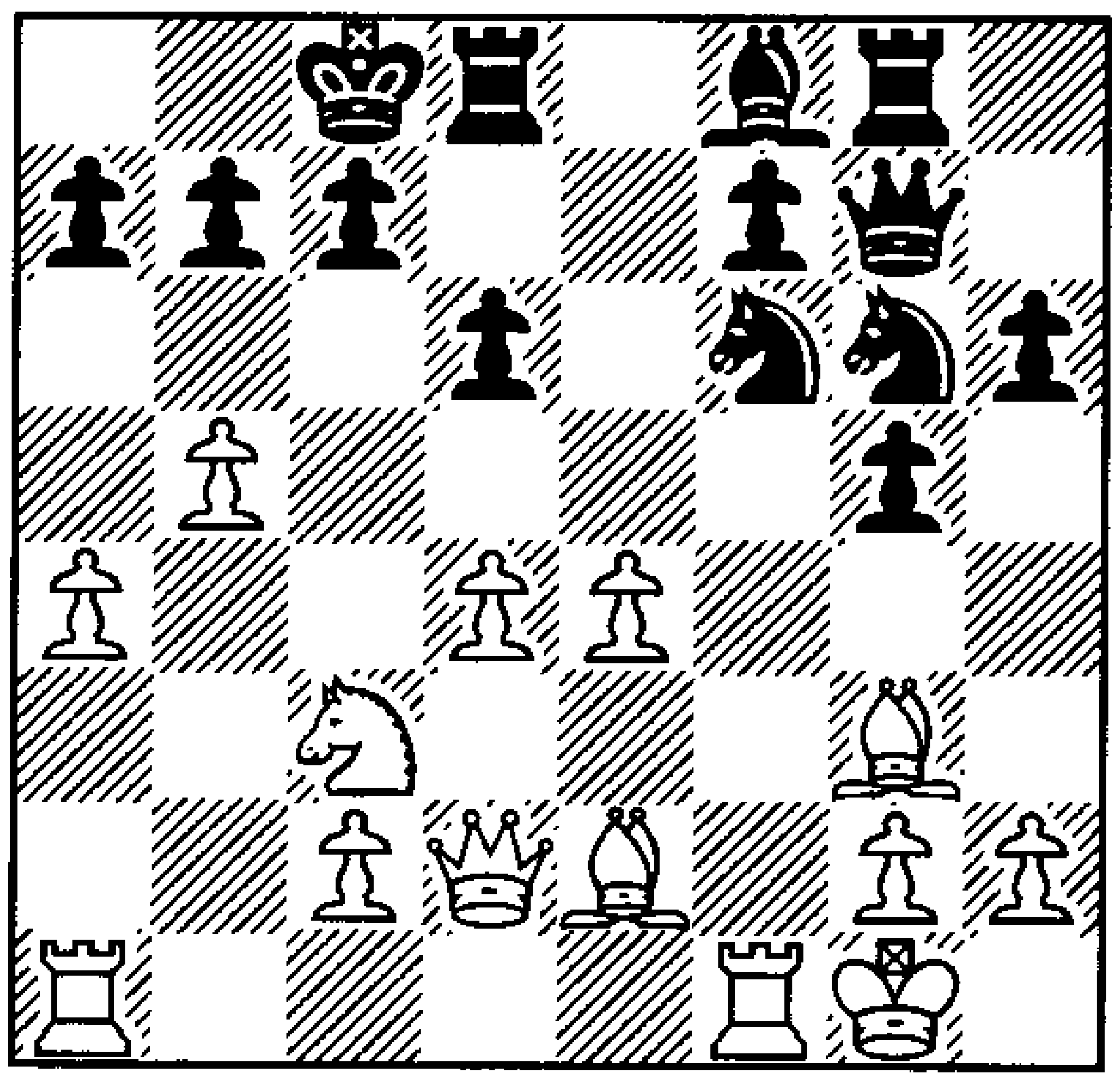
White not only pursues the queen, but also gradually prepares an attack on the king.

13...g5 14 ♗g3 ♕h6 15 b5 ♘ce7 16 ♖f1 ♘f6 17 ♔f2 ♘g6 18 ♔g1!



'It is hard to believe that out of 18 moves White has made six with his king! The unfortunate position of the black queen is very evident.' (Neishtadt) The outcome of the game is already decided: Black's scattered army is unable to come to the aid of its king.

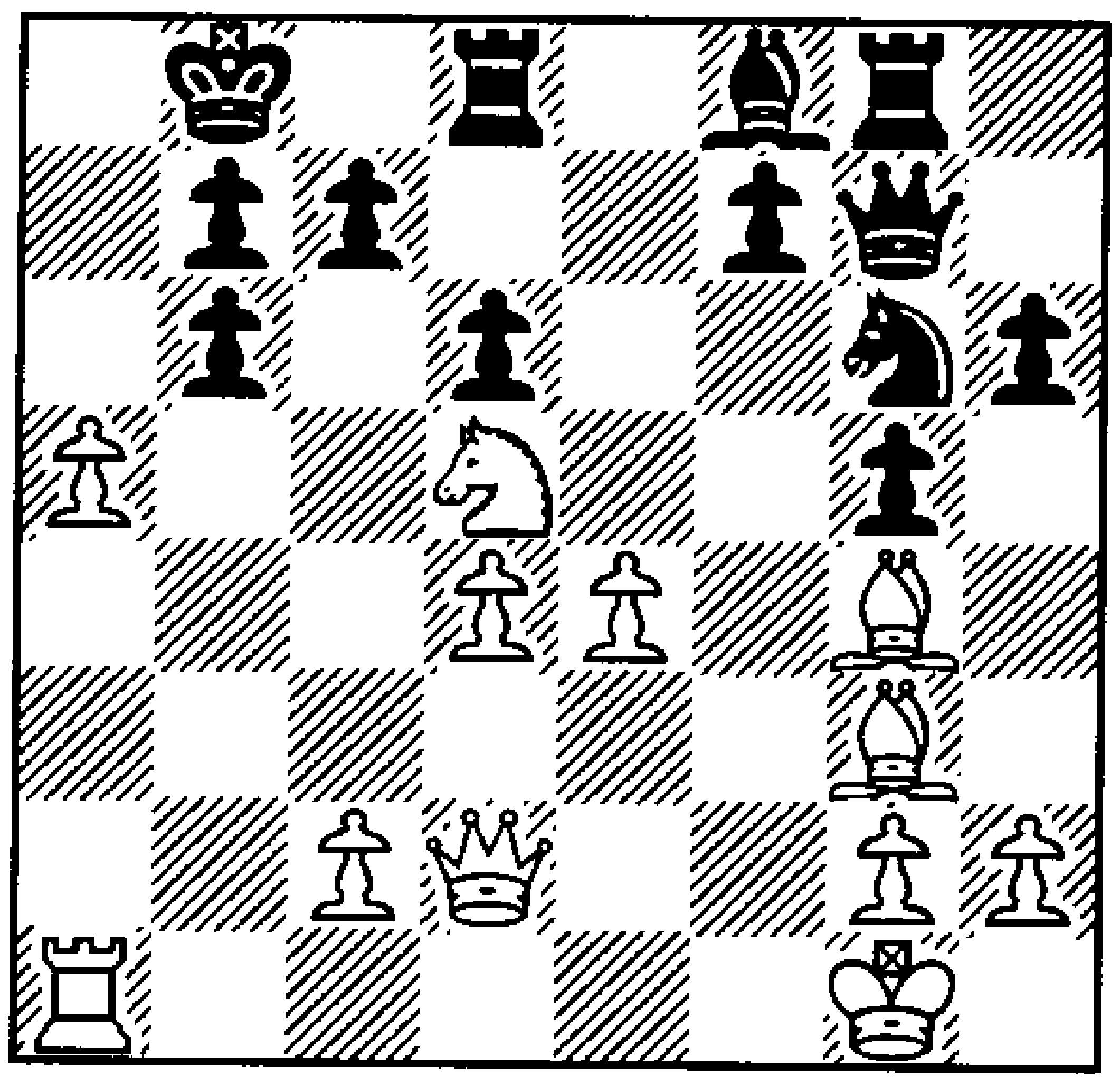
18...♕g7 19 ♕d2 h6 20 a4 ♖g8



21 b6! (a pawn sacrifice to open a file for a direct attack on the king – a procedure that was to become typical in the 20th century) **21...axb6 22 ♖xf6!**

A spectacular exchange sacrifice, securing the d5-square for the knight.

23...♕xf6 23 ♗g4+ ♔b8 24 ♘d5 ♕g7 25 a5 (all the white forces take part in the attack!)

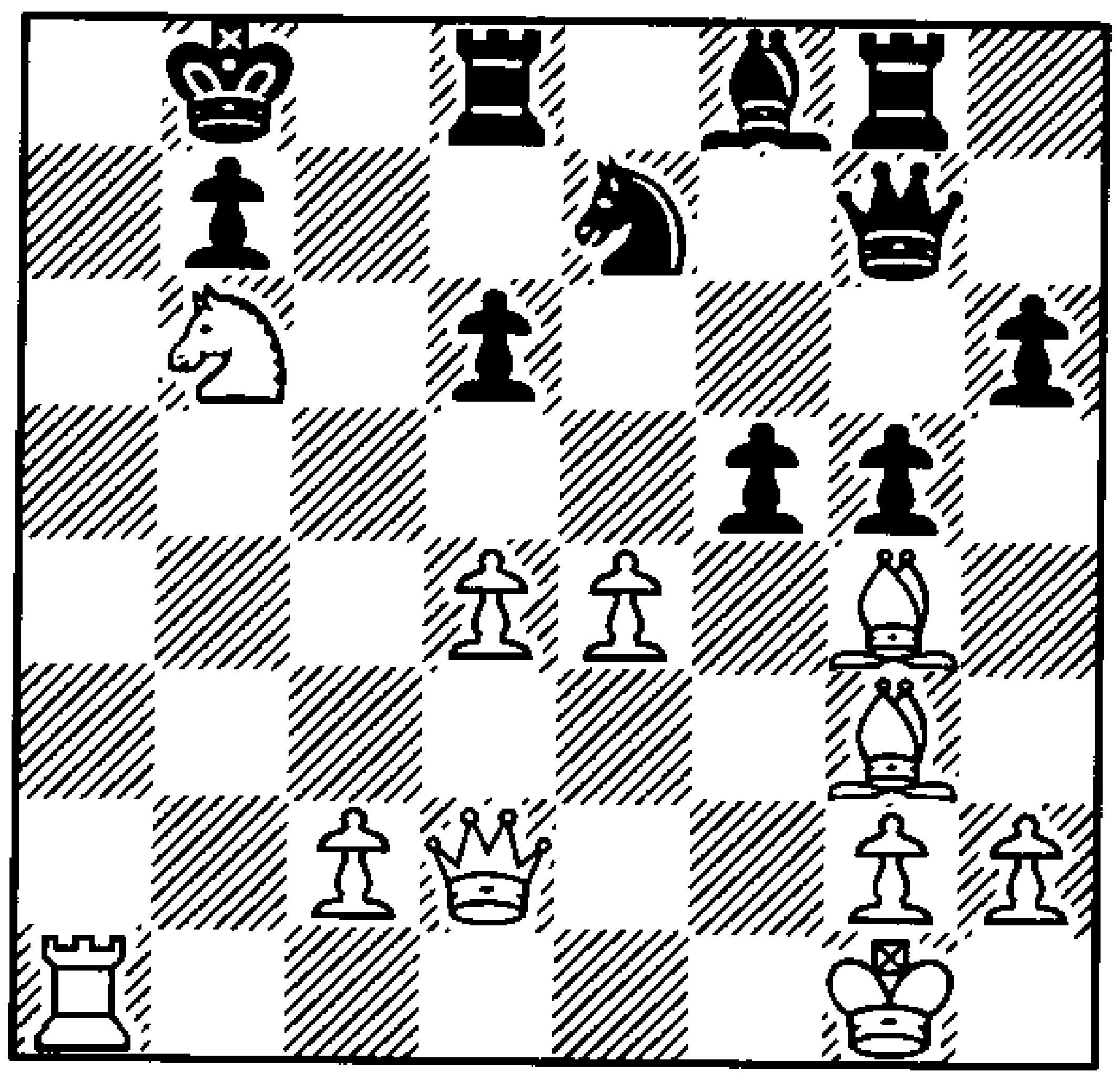


25...f5

A desperate attempt to delay the end, by including the queen in the defence. Other replies would have lost more quickly, for example: 25...♘e7 (25...c5 26 axb6!) 26 axb6 cxb6 (26...♘xd5 27 ♖a8+! ♔xa8 28 ♕a5+ and mate) 27 ♘xb6, or 25...b5 26 a6 b6 (26...bxa6 27 ♕a5) 27 a7+ ♔b7 28 ♘xc7 ♔xc7 29 ♕c3+ ♔b7 30 ♗d7! etc.

26 axb6 cxb6 27 ♘xb6! ♘e7

Mate follows after 27...fxg4 28 ♖a8+ ♔c7 29 ♕c3+ ♔xb6 30 ♕a5+ ♔c6 31 d5+ ♔d7 32 ♕d8 mate.



28 exf5

'Much stronger than 28 ♕c3, when there is 28...♘c6 (29 ♖a8+ ♔c7 30 ♘d5+ ♔d7 31 ♗xf5+ ♔e8).' (Neishtadt) However, here White has 31 exf5! ♕xd4+ (31...♖xa8 32 f6+ and 33 fxg7) 32 ♕xd4 ♘xd4 33 ♘f6+ ♔c7 34 ♖xd8 ♔xd8 35 ♘xg8 winning. But from the computer's point of view, 28 ♕b4 would have forced mate more quickly – 28...♔c7 29 ♘a8+ ♔c8 30 ♗xf5+ ♖d7 31 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 32 ♕xd6+ ♔e8 33 ♘c7+ ♔f7 34 ♕e6 mate. But we hardly have the right to criticise Steinitz for such an 'error'.

28...♕f7 29 f6 ♘c6 30 c4 (unhurried, but sufficient) **30...♘a7 31 ♕a2 ♘b5**

Desperation...

32 ♘d5

Again the computer prefers something different – 32 ♕a8+ ♔c7 33 ♕a5 with mate in three moves. Of course, Black could have resigned, but he preferred to be mated.

32...♕xd5 33 cxd5 ♘xd4 34 ♕a7+ ♔c7 35 ♖c1+ ♘c6 36 ♖xc6 mate!

In the second half of the tournament Steinitz also defeated Paulsen with Black, in good positional style. A lengthy period of re-evaluating chess values was beginning. 'At the tournaments in Paris (1867) and Baden-Baden (1870) I was hoping to take first prize,' the first world champion later recalled. 'On failing to achieve this, I was forced to think things over and I came to the conclusion that combinative play, although it sometimes gives fine results, is not able to ensure solid success. After a careful study of this type of game (*including, no doubt, those from his match with Anderssen – G. K.*) I discovered in them a number of defects. Many tempting and successful sacrifices turned out to be incorrect. I came to the conviction that sound defence demands far less expenditure of energy than attack. In general an attack has chances of success only when the opponent's position is already weakened. Since then my thinking has been aimed at finding a simple and sure way of weakening the enemy position.' A revolutionary step in the understanding of chess! Anderssen & Co. remain in the past...

In 1872 Steinitz won the international tournament in London (2. Blackburne, 3. Zukertort), then also a match against the young Zukertort (+7 -1 =4), and in 1873 he won an important international tournament in Vienna (2. Blackburne, 3. Anderssen), thus significantly enhancing his reputation as the strongest player in the world.

Soon he obtained a regular tribune – a chess column in the English sports newspaper *The Field*, where for nearly nine years he commented on the most interesting master games. This was a time not only of comparative material prosperity, but also of tireless searching, the gradual development of new playing principles.

On the way Steinitz scored a completely crushing (+7) match win against Blackburne – in the 1870s the most vivid representative of the combinative school. 'He felt himself obliged to demonstrate to his opponents *in practice* that their attacks were premature and therefore incorrect,' writes Euwe. 'This was an extremely difficult task, forcing Steinitz to develop the theory of defence; and since before him defensive skill was in its infancy, he was forced to be the pioneer.'

Believing religiously in the defensive properties of his cramped but unweakened positions, Steinitz considered it his duty to refute gambits and he would often deliberately provoke an attack against his king. The following characteristic game from the aforementioned match with Blackburne was highly rated and demonstrated many times in his lectures by Lasker.

Game 15

J.Blackburne-W.Steinitz

Match, London 1876, 4th game

Scotch Game C45

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♕h4!?

'Agreeing to subject himself to an attack, but winning a pawn.' (Lasker) And, I should add, avoiding the insipid struggle for equality after 4...♘f6 5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 ♗d3 (nowadays 6 e5 is topical) 6...d5 7 ♕e2 ♗e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♗f4 ♖b8 10 ♘d2 ♖e8 11 e5 ♗f8 12 ♘b3 ♘d7 13 ♗g3 c5 14 c4 d4 15 f4 ♖b6 16 ♖ae1 (Blackburne-Steinitz, London 1875).

5 ♘b5 ♗b4+ (5...♕xe4+ 6 ♗e3! Paulsen-Steinitz, Vienna 1882; Chigorin-Steinitz, Havana 19th matchgame 1892)

6 ♗d2!

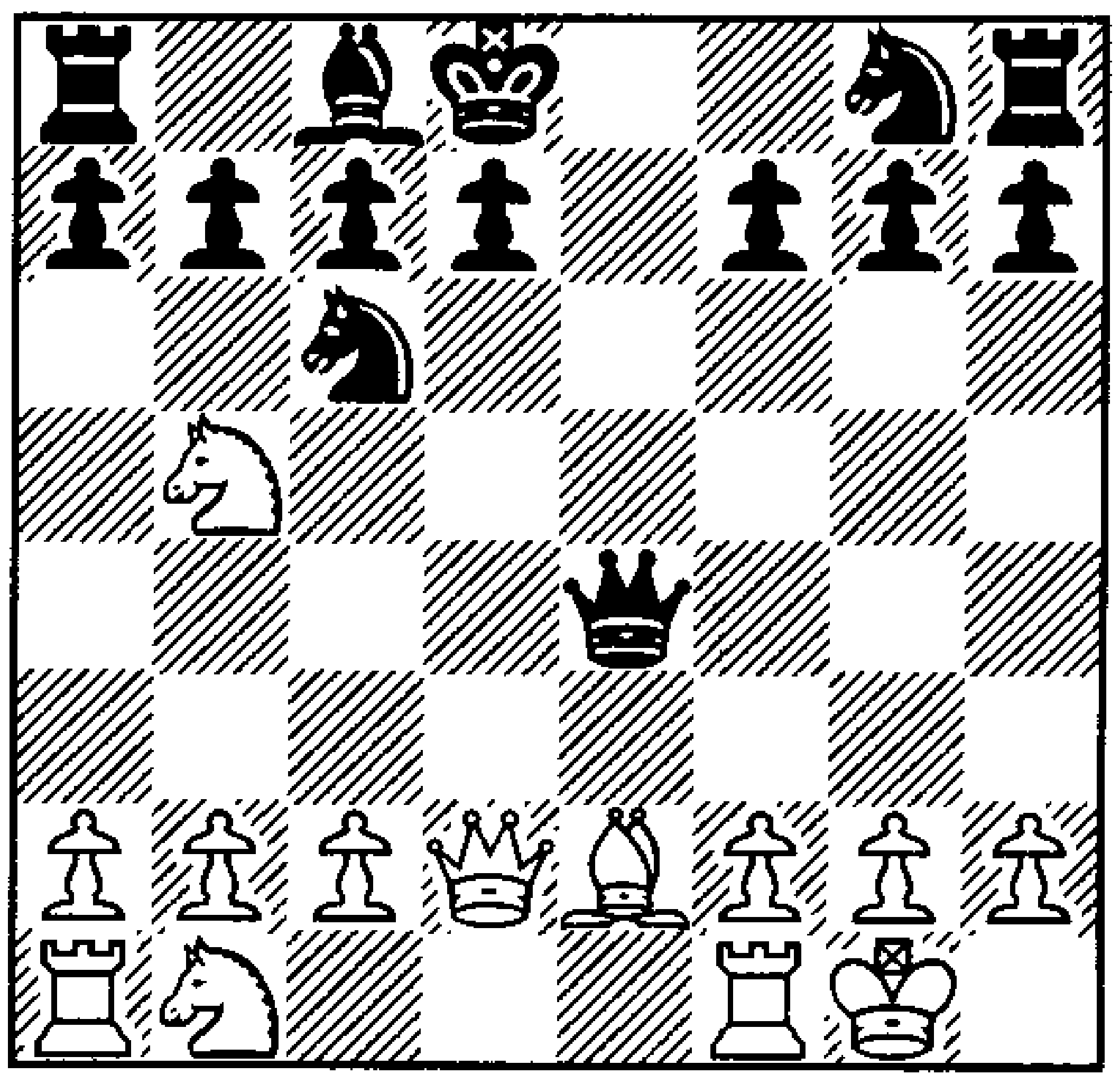
Inferior is 6 ♘1c3 ♗a5!

6...♕xe4+ 7 ♗e2 ♔d8!

'The king defends the pawn, taking up a comparatively safe position.' (Lasker) Other replies clearly favour White: 7...♗xd2+ 8 ♕xd2 (8 ♘xd2!) 8...♕e5 9 f4 ♕xb2 10 0-0 ♕xa1 11 ♘1c3 (Bronstein), or 7...♕xg2 8 ♗f3 ♗xd2+ 9 ♘xd2 ♕h3 10 ♗xc6! bxc6 11 ♘xc7+ ♔d8 12 ♘xa8 ♘f6 13 ♕f3.

8 0-0 ♗xd2 9 ♕xd2

9 ♘xd2 comes into consideration, for example: 9...♕f4 10 g3 ♕h6 11 ♘c4 ♘ge7 12 ♕d3 a6 13 ♘d4 ♘xd4 14 ♕xd4 ♘c6 15 ♕c3 with sufficient compensation, or 9...♕e5 10 ♖e1 ♘f6 (10...♘ge7!?) 11 ♗c4 (11 ♘f3!?) 11...♕f5 (11...♕c5 12 c3!) 12 ♘f3 with the initiative (Sveshnikov-Sermek, Bled 1994).



9...a6!?

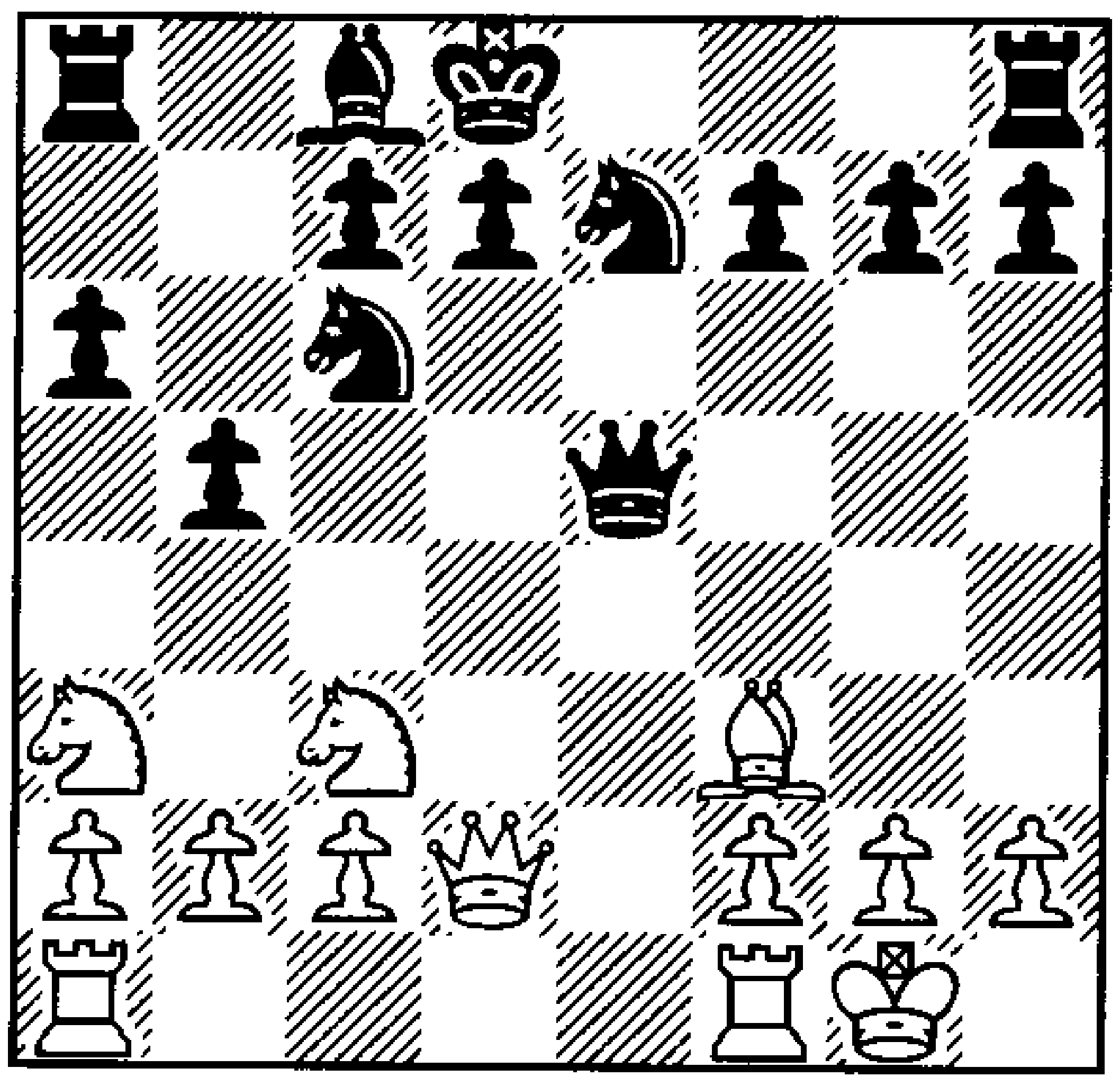
'The advanced white knight may cause problems, and so it is driven back.' (Lasker) In the second game of the match Steinitz played 9...♘f6 and after 10 ♘1c3 ♕e5 11 ♖fe1 a6 12 ♘a3 ♕d4 13 ♕g5 ♖g8 14 ♖ad1 h6 15 ♕g3

♕e5 16 ♕h4 ♕g5 17 ♕c4 White retained compensation for the pawn (although in the end he lost).

10 ♘1c3

The attempt 10 ♘5a3 ♕d4 11 ♕g5+ ♕f6 12 ♕d2 ended in failure in the sixth game: 12...♕xb2 13 ♘c4 ♕d4! 14 ♕c1 ♘ge7 15 ♘bd2 d6 16 ♖d1 ♗e6 etc.

10...♕e5 11 ♘a3 b5!? 12 ♗f3 ♘ge7



13 ♖ad1

Black's position is extremely dangerous, as is evident from the variation 13 ♖fe1!? ♕f6? 14 ♖xe7! And if 13...♕d6 White could have maintained the pressure by 14 ♘d5 ♖e8 15 ♖ad1 or gone into a slightly superior ending: 14 ♕xd6 cxd6 15 ♘e4 ♔c7 16 c4.

13...♕f5 14 ♖fe1 ♖b8!

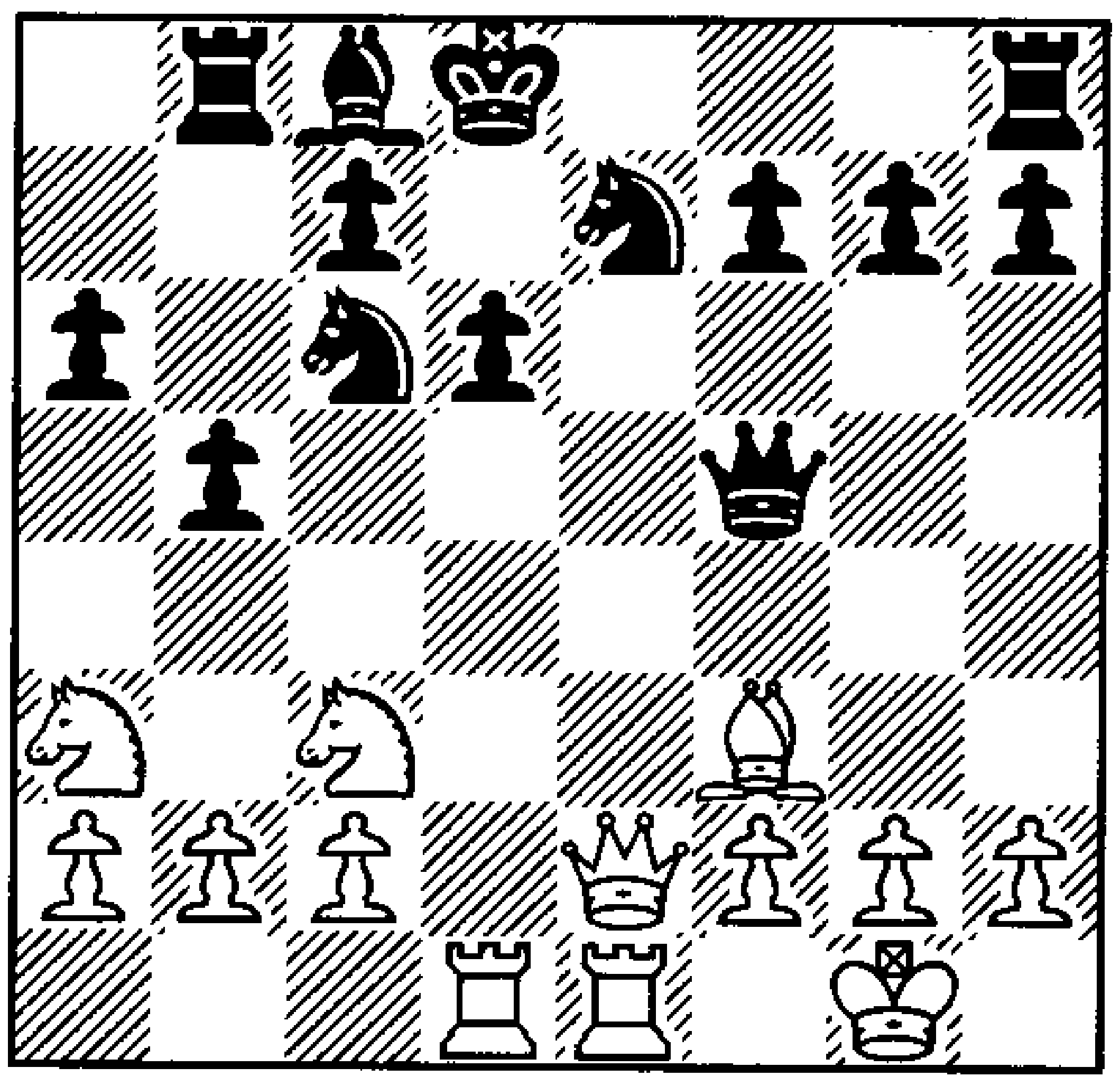
As Lasker put it, 'the rook seeks a safe square.'

15 ♕e2?

But this really is a hideous move! The commentators did not in fact answer the question: where did Blackburne make the decisive mistake? I will answer: after the move in the game White loses his compensation for the pawn, whereas after 15 ♗xc6! (an unexpected exchange, but here the bishop is not needed) 15...♘xc6 16 ♘d5 ♗b7 17 c4 he would still have had a rather unpleasant initiative: it is hard for Black to complete his development.

15...d6

'It is interesting in the highest degree to follow how little by little the defending side arranges his pieces for offensive action.' (Lasker).

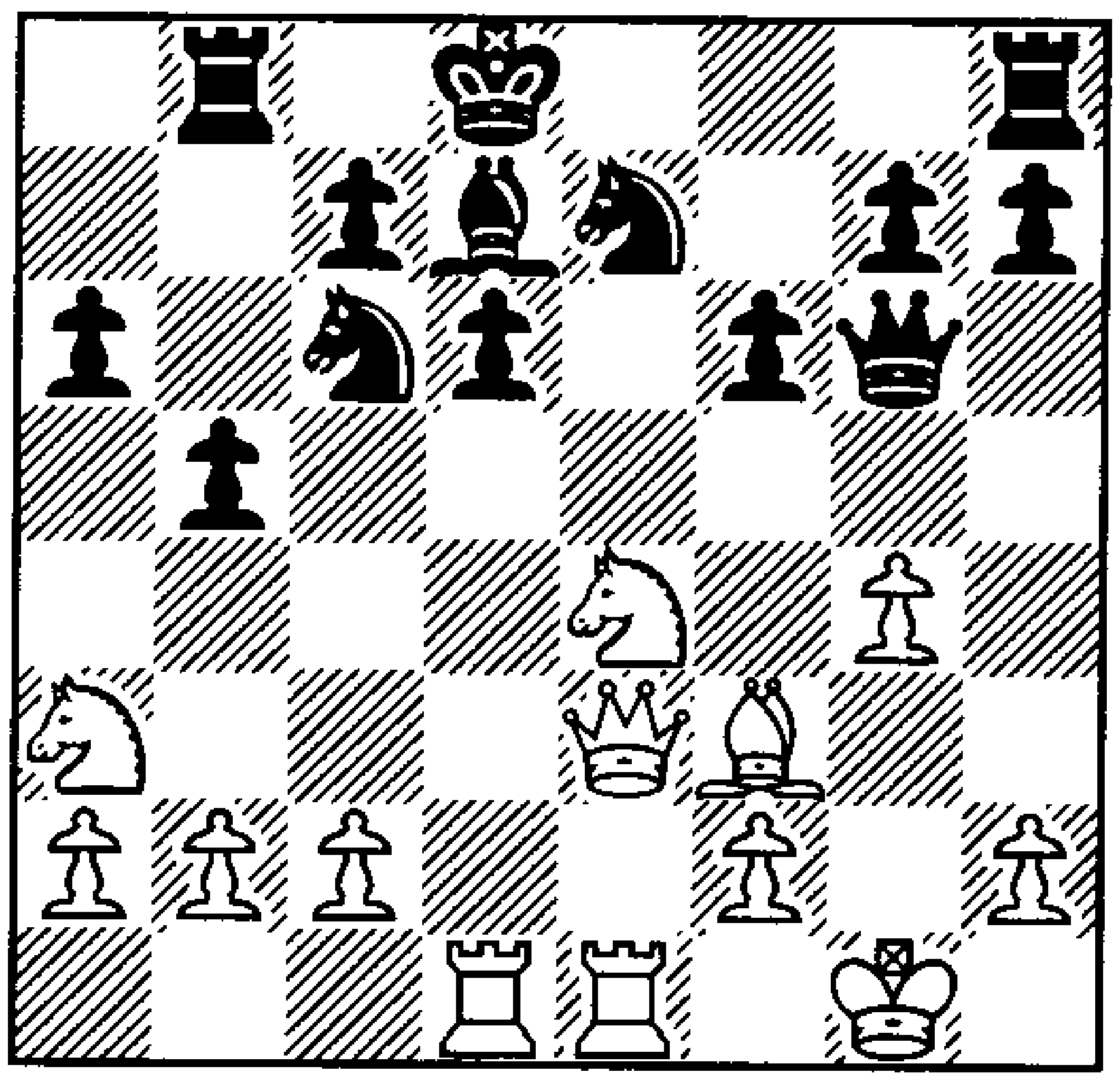


16 ♘e4 ♗d7 17 ♕e3 f6 (17...♖e8!? looks even better) **18 g4?**

After this lunge, combined with the following knight sacrifice, there is no longer any way back.

18...♕g6

Threatening to launch a counterattack.



19 ♘xd6?!

A desperate piece sacrifice, which merely hastens the end.

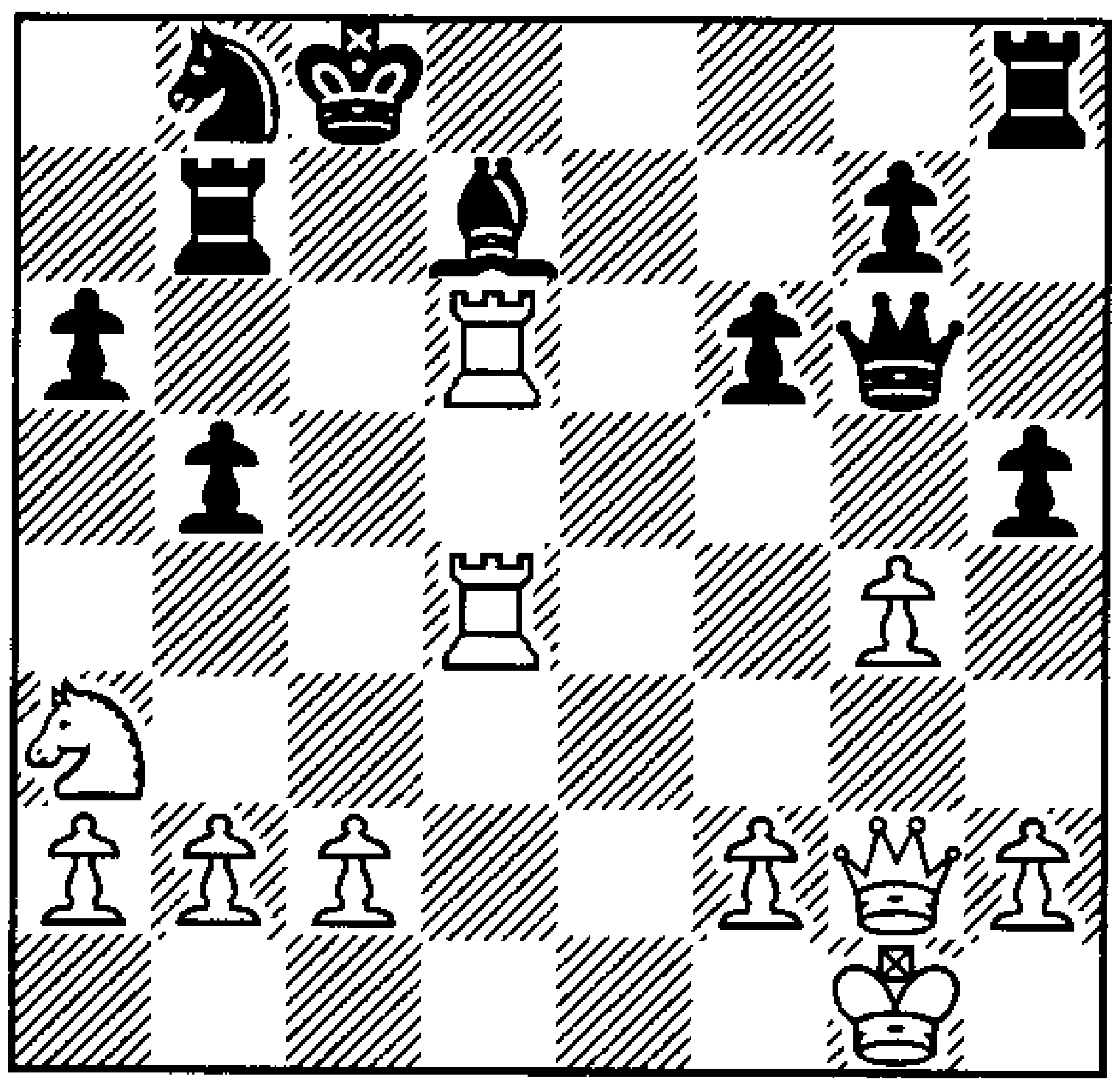
19...cxd6 20 ♖xd6 ♔c7 (20...♘e5!?) **21 ♗xc6**

If 21 ♕c5 Steinitz would have had to find the firm reply 21...♕g5!, and after 22 ♖xe7 ♕xc5 23 ♖exd7+ ♔b6 24 ♖xc6+ (or 24 b4 ♕xb4 25 ♖xc6+ ♔a5 26 ♖dd6 ♖a8 and wins) 24...♕xc6 25 ♗xc6 ♔xc6 26 ♖xg7 ♖bg8 it would all have been over.

21...♘xc6 22 ♕g3 ♔c8 23 ♖ed1 ♖b7 24 ♕g2 ♘b8

'Strengthening the weakest point – the bishop at d7.' (Lasker)

25 ♖1d4 h5!



The long-awaited counterattack. There is nothing more to comment on: White is material down and in a completely hopeless position.

26 ♕d5 ♕g5 27 ♕xg5 fxg5 28 ♖g6 ♗xg4 29 ♖xg5 ♖e8 30 ♔g2 ♖f7 31 h3 ♗d7 32 ♔g3 ♖e2 33 ♖xh5 ♖exf2 34 ♖c5+ ♘c6,

and Black won on move 51.

After this match Steinitz did not take part in any serious competitions for six years(!), earning his living by giving extraordinarily successful simultaneous displays (including some blindfold – it was about him that they said: he came, he did not see, he conquered) and his tireless commentary work in *The Field*. Thanks to his deep and witty analyses, his positional theory, which was still not understood by anyone, step-by-step acquired increasingly real form...

Studying the games of that time, one sees how they gradually become more complicated, how their quality improves, and how the resistive capacity of the players and their defensive skill increases. On the other hand, the best masters also had to develop their attacking skill, seeking new continuations in well-known set-ups. Here too Steinitz was successful! Moreover, he was not satisfied by seeking isolated improvements, but he developed complete strategic trends in the opening and the middlegame, based on his theory of accumulating small advantages. A classic example of such an innovation is his 'Steinitz Variation' in the French Defence.

Game 16

W.Steinitz-A.Sellmann

Baltimore 1885

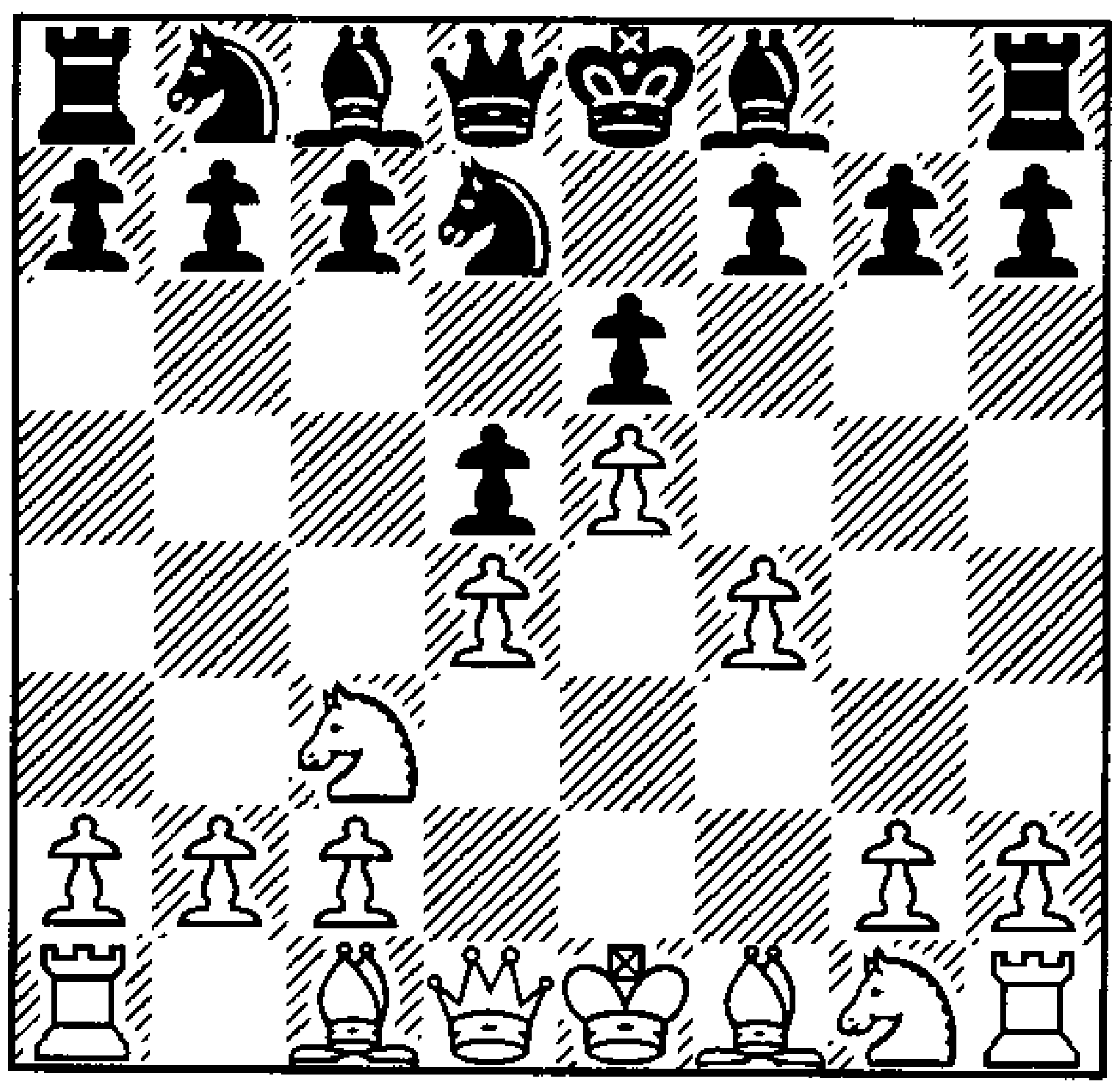
French Defence C11

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 e5

Previously Steinitz also played like Anderssen – 4 ♗g5.

4...♘fd7 5 f4!?

Before this, also following the example of Anderssen, it was thought that the only way to fight for an advantage was to maintain the pawn centre by 5 ♘ce2 c5 6 c3 ♘c6 7 f4 ♕b6 8 ♘f3 (Steinitz-Fleissig, Vienna 1873). Today, in a new cycle in the evolution of chess, this variation is employed with great success by Anand.



5...c5 6 dxc5!?

'Steinitz's patent. The systematic play, begun with this move, aimed at creating and exploiting the piece outpost on d4, made a great impression, especially on the next generation of masters.' (Neishtadt) Nowadays this classical plan is usually carried out after 6 ♘f3 ♘c6

7 ♗e3!

6...♗xc5 (6...♘c6 7 ♘f3 ♗xc5 is safer) **7 ♘f3**

The alternative is 7 ♕g4!? 0-0 8 ♘f3.

7...a6

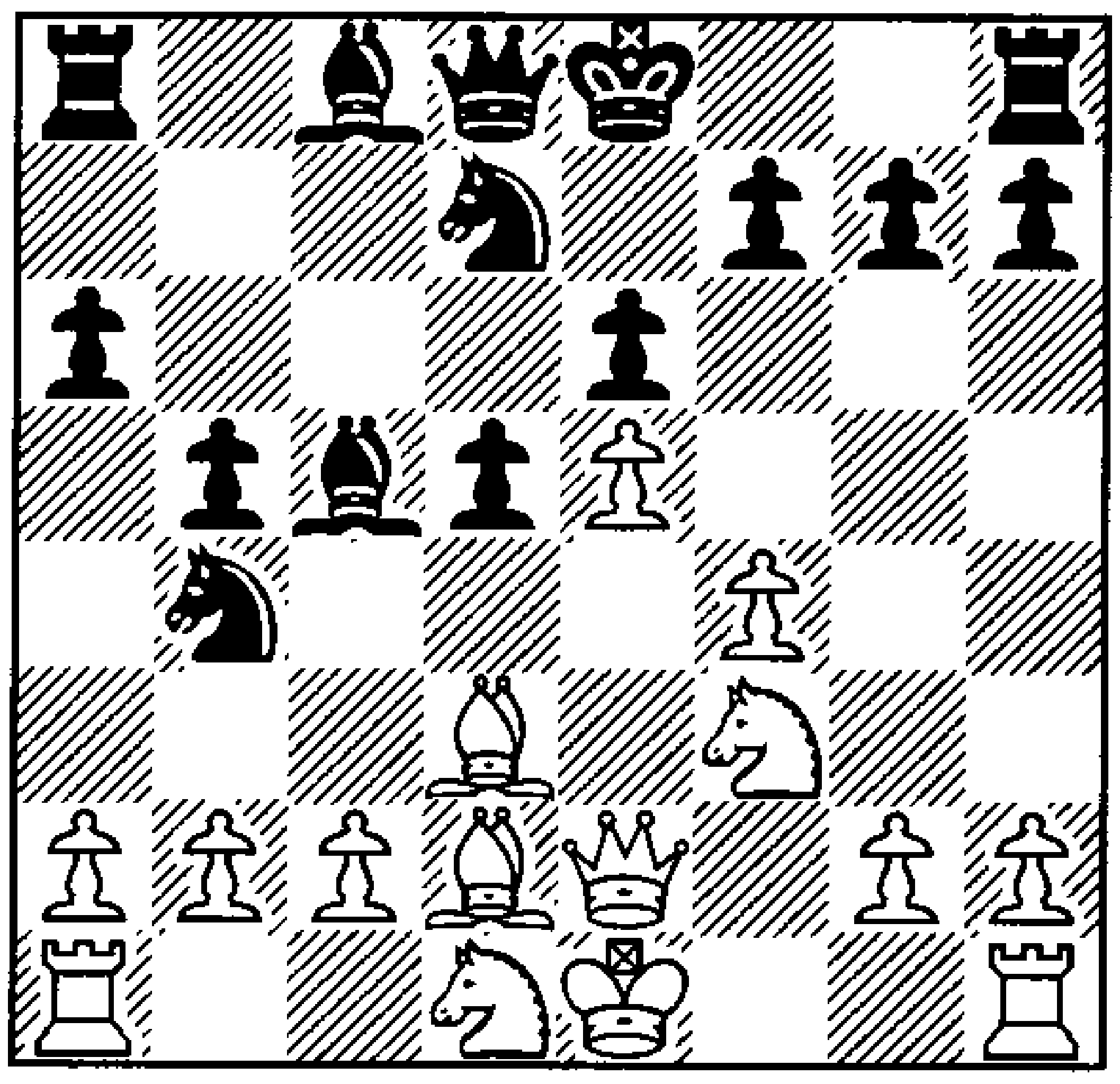
Not an essential move. If 7...0-0?! 8 ♗d3 ♘c6 White has the attractive 9 h4! f6 10 ♘g5! fxg5 11 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 12 hxg5+ ♔g8 13 ♕h5 ♘dxe5 14 fxe5 ♖f5 15 g4 ♖xe5+ 16 ♔d1 ♗e3 17 ♗xe3 ♖xe3 18 ♘b5 ♖f3 19 g6 ♔f8 20 ♕h8+ ♔e7 21 ♕xg7+ 1-0 (Steinitz-Golmayo, Havana 1888). But 7...♘c6 8 ♗d3 f6! is better, immediately undermining the strong e5-pawn: after 9 exf6 ♘xf6 10 ♕e2 0-0 11 ♗d2 ♘d4 or 11...♗d7 Black has no problems.

8 ♗d3 ♘c6 9 ♕e2 ♘b4?!

A fundamental mistake: Black loses control over the centre! More appropriate is 9...♕c7 10 ♗d2 b5 11 a3 ♖b8 12 ♘d1 ♘b6 with equal chances (Boleslavsky-Pachman, Saltsjöbaden interzonal 1948). But it was as if Sellmann had set himself the aim of accompanying his opponent in the creation of a positional masterpiece, and of helping the latter to demonstrate his plan in its purest form.

10 ♗d2 b5 11 ♘d1

I would have preferred 11 a3!? ♘xd3 12 cxd3, not moving the knight away from the key d4-square.



11...♘xd3+ 12 cxd3!

It may seem strange to attach an exclamation mark to a move which today would be automatically made by any candidate master. But then, in 1885, the consequences of the pawn capture were by no means obvious, and the majority of players were simply unable to think long-term.

12...♕b6?!

Here 12...b4! suggests itself (seizing space on the queenside and not allowing White to fix the a5- and c5-squares) 13 ♖c1 a5 with the intention of ...♗a6, although after 14 ♗e3 White retains some advantage.

13 b4!

'Beginning play on the queenside, where the opponent has a weak square at c5, whereas Steinitz's c4-square is defended by the d3-pawn.' (Lasker)

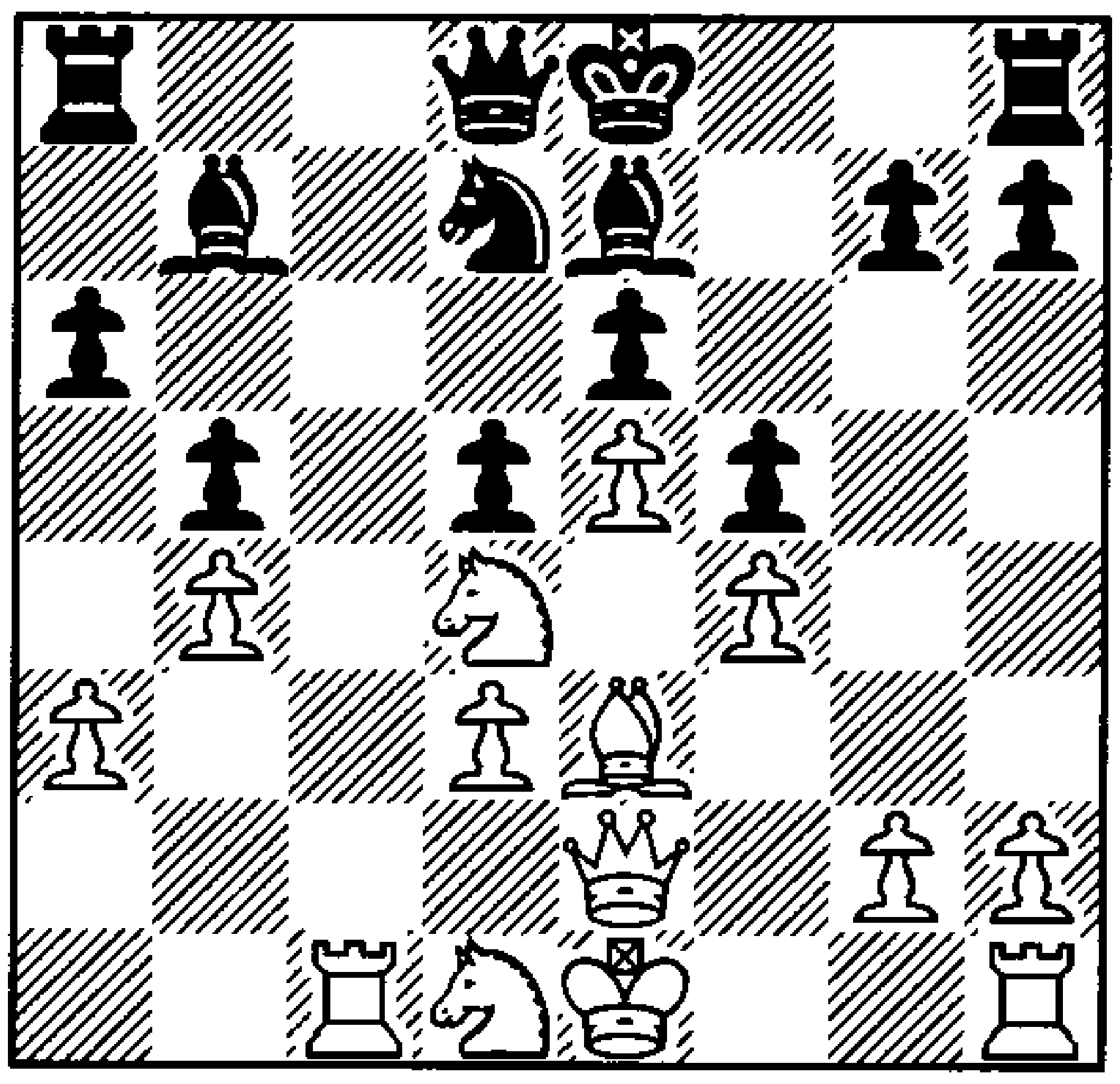
13...♗e7 14 a3 f5?

Essentially the decisive positional mistake: Black leaves himself without counterplay. 14...f6 has been recommended, but in my view the radical 14...d4! 15 ♕f2 ♗b7 was essential, opening up the bishop and retaining the possibility of the undermining move ...f7-f6.

15 ♖c1 (15 ♗e3!?) **15...♗b7?**

The last chance was 15...d4! 16 ♕f2 ♗b7, sacrificing the d-pawn for the sake of activating the bishop.

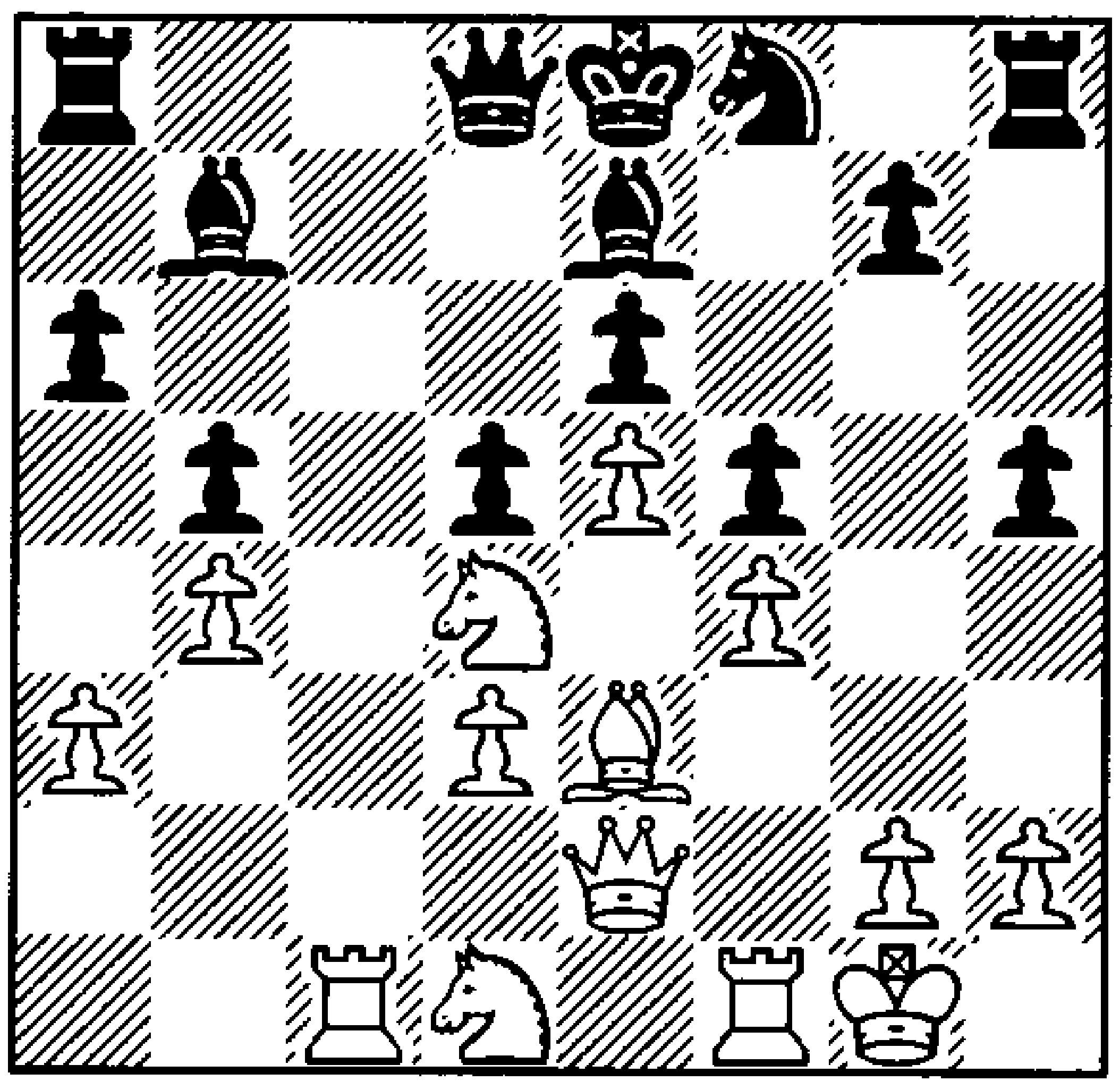
16 ♗e3 ♕d8 17 ♘d4



Here it is, the dream of a player from the 20th century: a powerful knight at d4 against a pitiful bishop at b7. Now Black can merely await the inevitable execution.

17...♘f8 18 0-0 h5?!

Preventing the g2-g4 breakthrough, which could have been unpleasant with the king on f7. However, although the game is decided on the opposite wing, later White is able to benefit from the weakening of the g5-square and the h4-d8 diagonal. Never advance your pawns without real need – this is one of Steinitz's basic rules!



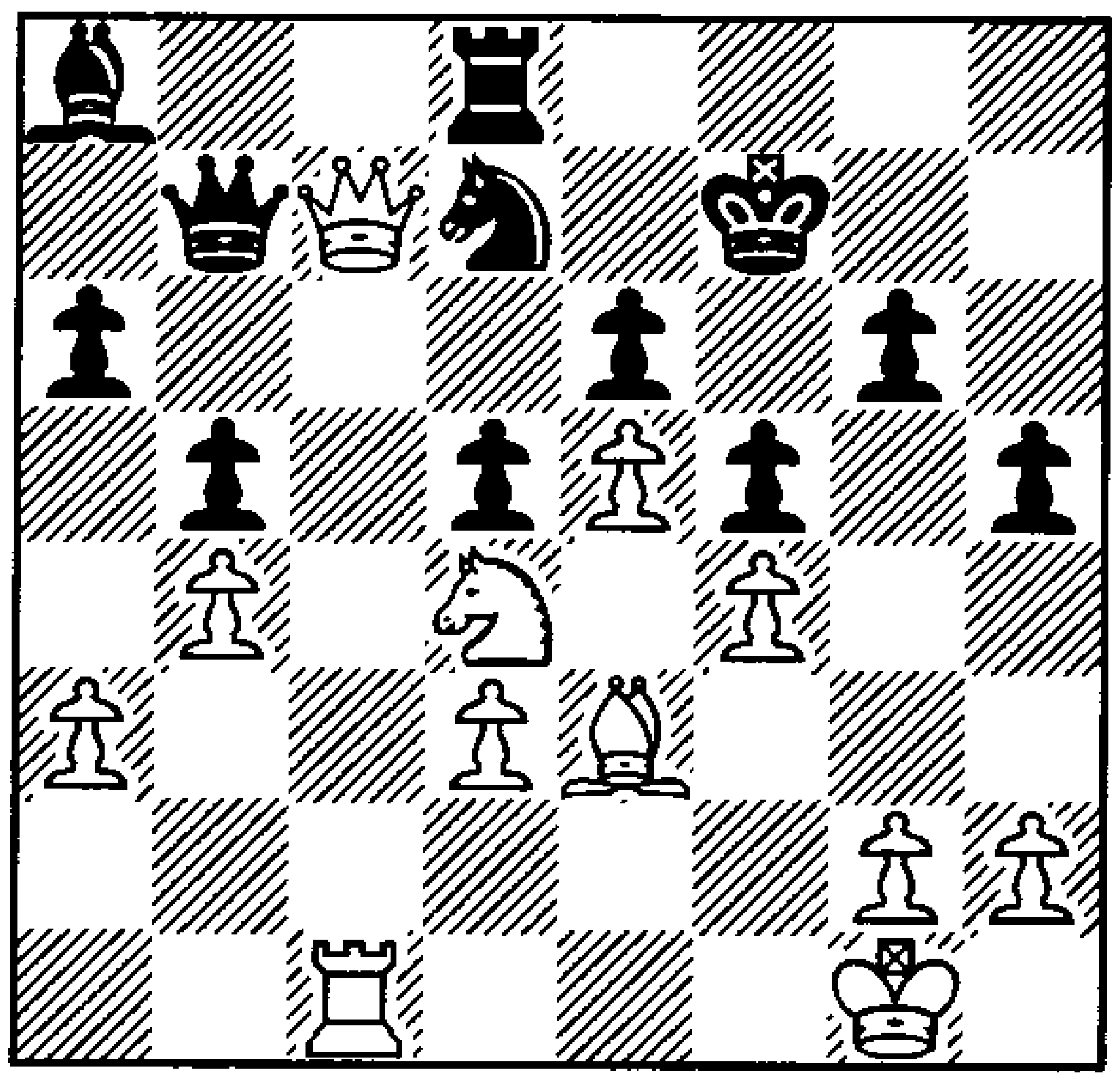
19 ♘c3!

'The start of a multi-move manoeuvre, the aim of which is to create an outpost at a weak point in the enemy position.' (Lasker) The knight is aiming for a5.

19...♔f7 20 ♘b1! g6 21 ♘d2 ♘d7 22 ♘2b3 ♖c8 23 ♘a5

At last! White tightens the noose around the opponent's neck.

23...♗a8 24 ♖xc8 ♕xc8 25 ♖c1 ♕b8 26 ♕c2 ♗d8 27 ♘ac6 ♕b7 28 ♘xd8+ (exchanging the defender of the dark squares) **28...♖xd8 29 ♕c7!** (the decisive invasion)



29...♕b8

Sellmann has defended his main weaknesses, but here Steinitz brings another piece into play.

30 ♗f2!

With the threat of ♗h4 – here you have the consequences of 18...h5?! Now the defensive resources are exhausted.

30...♕b6 31 ♘f3 ♕xc7 32 ♖xc7 ♔e8 33 ♘g5 ♘f8 34 ♗c5 ♘d7 35 ♗d6 1-0

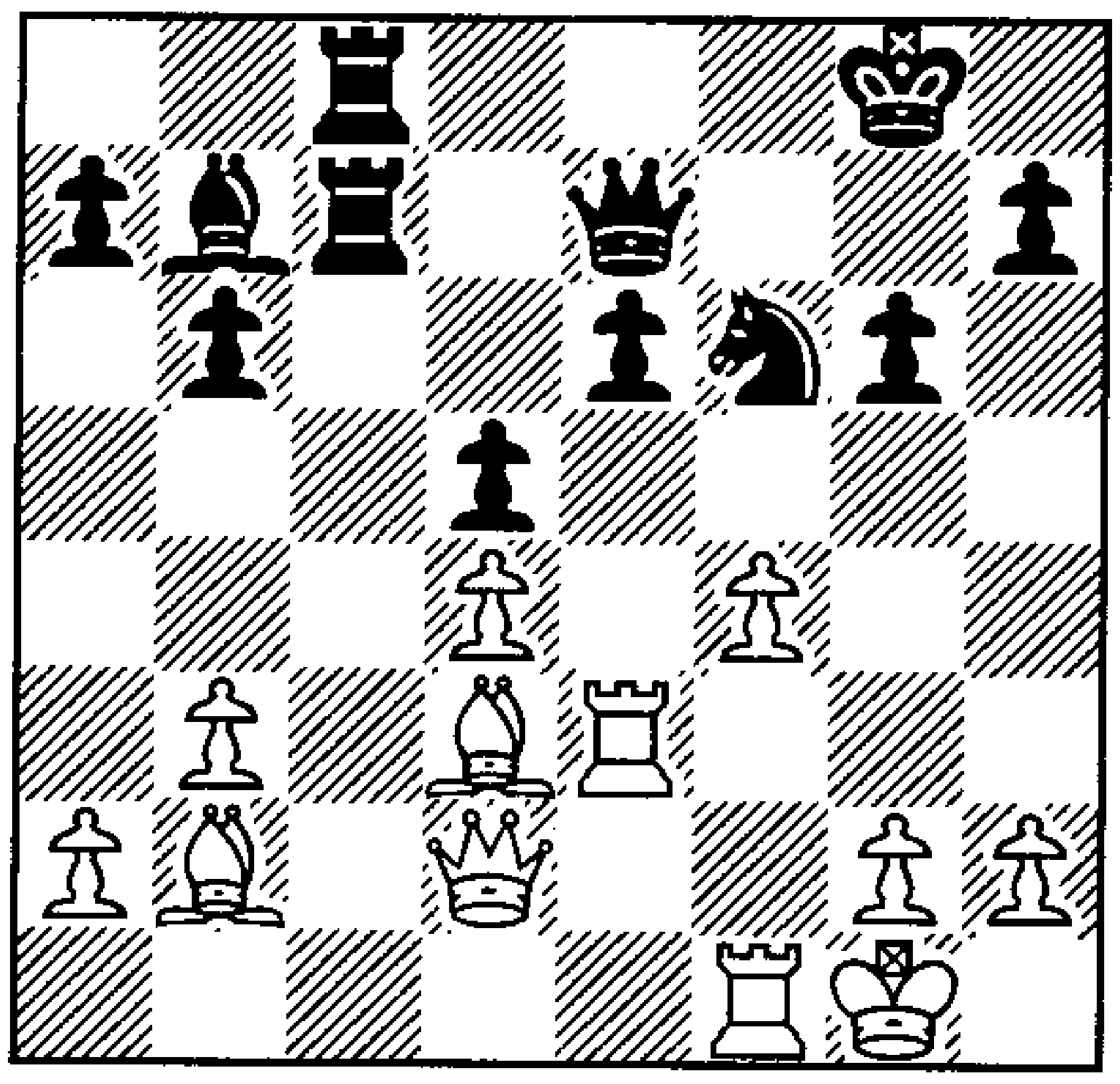
Black is in zugzwang and is unable to defend his e6- and a6-pawns. A strategic triumph!

An Historic Match

Steinitz resumed playing in 1882, sharing first place at the international tournament in Vienna. Zukertort, who by now had become remarkably strong, was overshadowed here (although he defeated Steinitz in their mini-match: 1½-½), but soon he achieved the greatest success in his career, winning the famous London tournament of 1883: 1. Zukertort – 22 out of 26; 2. Steinitz – 19; 3. Blackburne – 16½; 4. Chigorin – 16. For the first time in many years the question arose: who in fact was now the world's strongest player?

Johann Hermann Zukertort (1842-1888) was Anderssen's most talented pupil and he played at least a thousand games with him, including two matches: in 1863 (+3 -8 =1) and in 1871 (+5 -2). Then together with his teacher he edited the magazine *Neue Berliner Schachzeitung*, and with Dufresne he also wrote a popular manual. In 1872 Zukertort settled in London and, although he had a medical education, he gave up his medical practice and devoted himself entirely to chess. In 1879 he founded (together with Lipót Hoffer) the magazine *Chess Monthly*, on the pages of which he engaged in sharp arguments with Steinitz. He was fluent in a dozen languages, had a phenomenal memory, and gave record-breaking simultaneous blindfold displays. It need hardly be said that the natural element of the outstanding German master was combination...

Game 17
J.Zukertort-J.Blackburne
London 1883

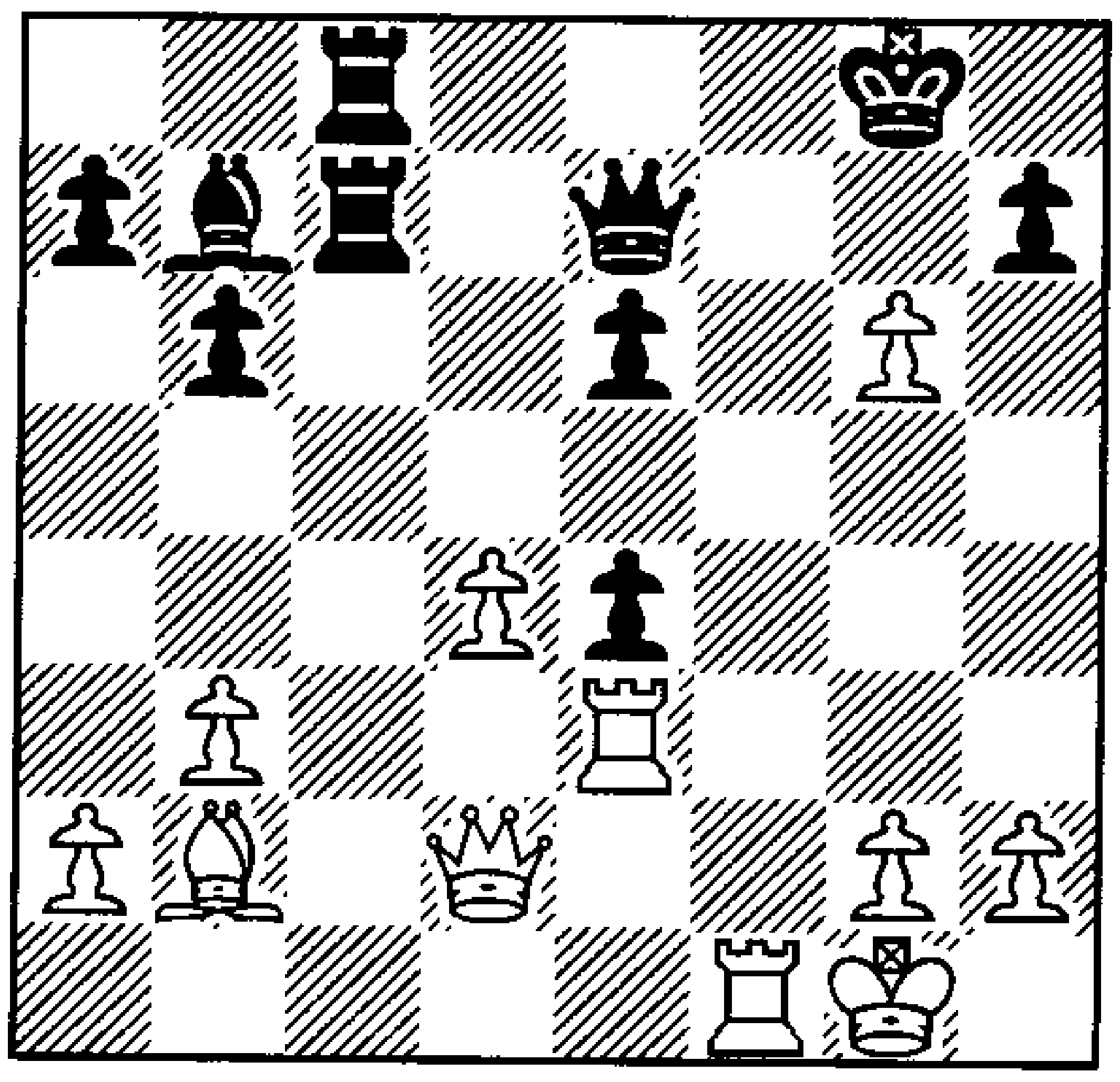


23 f5! (in the words of Steinitz, 'the start of a remarkable conception of grandiose scale')
23...♘e4

Black was pinning all his hopes on this move. 23...gxf5 24 ♗xf5 ♘e4 25 ♗xe4 dxe4 was unsatisfactory in view of 26 ♖g3+ ♔h8 27 d5+ e5 28 d6.

24 ♗xe4 dxe4 25 fxg6!

'This unexpected move, allowing Black to invade with his rook on c2 and "win" a piece, was undoubtedly foreseen by Zukertort much earlier. The essence of the remarkable combinative idea concealed in it is still far from obvious.' (Romanovsky)

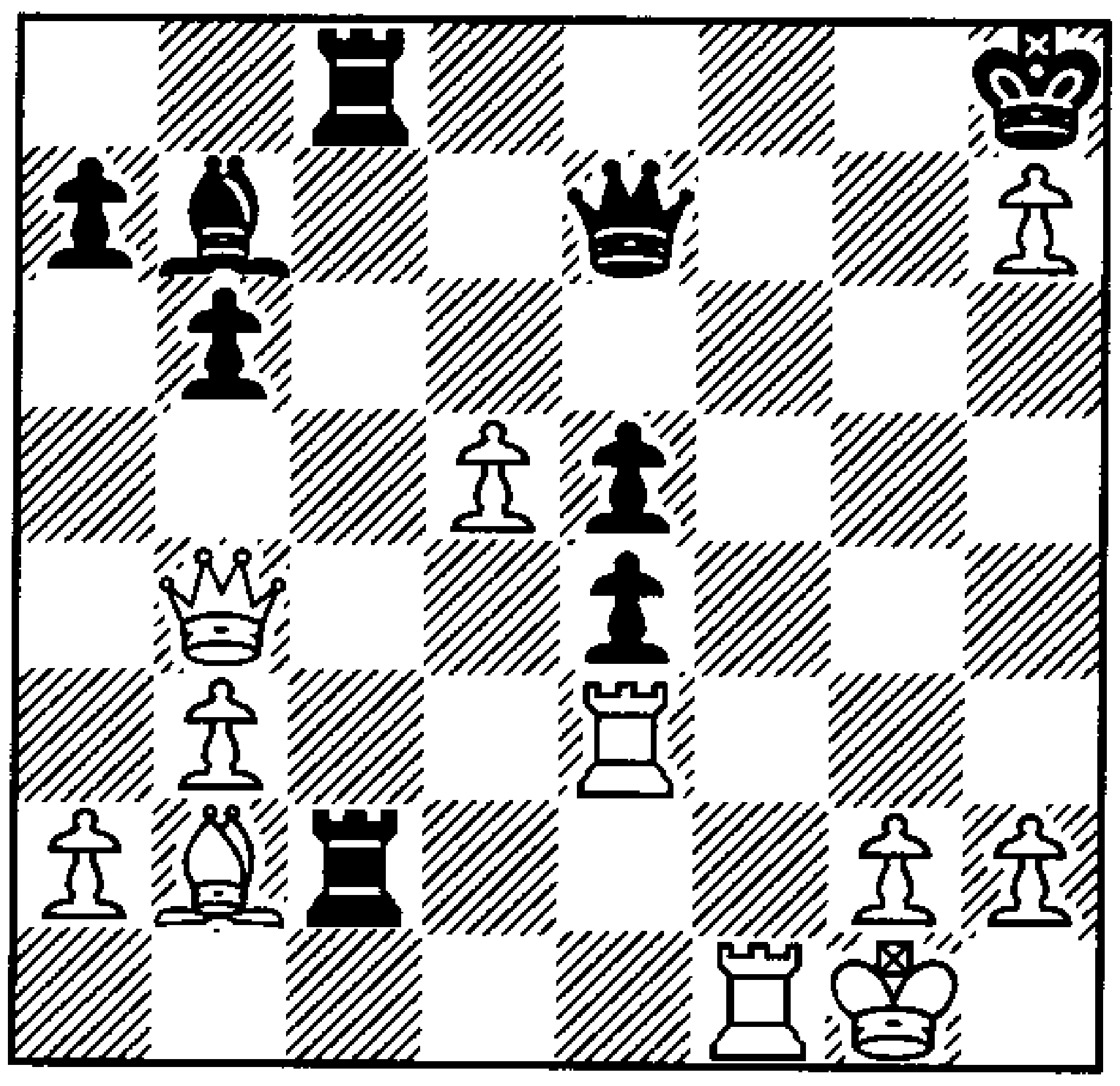


25...♖c2

'Despite its ruinous consequences, this is perhaps the only chance. 25...hxg6 26 ♖g3 ♕g7 27 d5 e5 28 ♕g5 ♖e8 29 ♖f6 is hopeless for Black.' (Zukertort)

26 gxh7+ ♔h8 27 d5+ e5 28 ♕b4!!

The point of White's idea is the diversion of the enemy queen!



28...♖8c5

If 28...♕xb4 there would have followed 29 ♗xe5+ ♔xh7 30 ♖h3+ ♔g6 31 ♖g3+ ♔h6 (or 31...♔h7 32 ♖f7+) 32 ♖f6+ ♔h5 33 ♖f5+ ♔h6 34 ♗f4+ ♔h7 35 ♖h5 mate, while if 28...♕e8 29 ♖f8+! ♕xf8 30 ♗xe5+ ♔xh7 31 ♕xe4+!

29 ♖f8+!

'In conjunction with White's previous play, this forms one of the most noble combinations conceived over the chessboard.' (Steinitz)

29...♔xh7 (or 29...♕xf8 30 ♗xe5+ ♔xh7 31 ♕xe4+ with a rapid mate) **30 ♕xe4+ ♔g7 31 ♗xe5+ ♔xf8 32 ♗g7+! ♔g8** (32...♕xg7 33 ♕e8 mate) **33 ♕xe7 1-0**

'Words are insufficient to express the admiration of the mastery with which Zukertort conducted this game,' wrote Steinitz in the press, and at the same time, as if anticipating the future, in a letter to his future biographer L. Bachmann he commented: 'True strength also assumes strength of character, and for this reason I have doubts about Zukertort's genius...'

Naturally, Steinitz was eager to regain the reputation of the number one player in the world: immediately after the London tournament he challenged Zukertort to a match. The battle between the two stars promised to become an event comparable with the legendary Morphy-Anderssen encounter. However, as the jokers of the time expressed it, 'the greatest of matches of our time demanded, if not the greatest, then the longest negotiations.'

Meanwhile, before London 1883 the publisher of *The Field* had closed down Steinitz's chess column (and after the tournament it was relaunched... under the editorship of Hoffer and Zukertort!), and the maestro had to seek other work. Alas, in England he was unable to find any... In the autumn of 1883 Steinitz emigrated to America, declaring that he was ready to play Zukertort anywhere, except in London. From then on his numerous commentaries and articles were published in the New York *Tribune* and in his own *International Chess Magazine*, which was begun with the help of new friends in 1885.

There in the USA, now after the death of the great Morphy, the organisers of a Steinitz-Zukertort match were announced. Everyone accepted Steinitz's suggestion to play to 10 wins, draws not counting, and to consider this competition – for the first time in history! – an official match for the title Champion of the World.

There was an important nuance: with a score of 9-9 the match would be considered to have ended in a draw, since the players did not want the outcome of such an important duel to rest on the result of one game. Such a rule was to apply later in a number of unlimited matches for the world championship, and it became a stumbling-block in the years when Fischer was champion (as will be described in a later volume).

The long-awaited match began on 11 January 1886 in New York, before a large crowd of spectators, in Cartier's Rooms on Fifth Avenue. The moves were displayed on a special demonstration board, and the demonstrator was the well-known master McKenzie! They played for a stake of $2000 from each side, three games a week, up to four wins for one of the players in New York, up to a further three in St Louis, and then in New Orleans, Morphy's home town. The time control was two hours for 30 moves, then, after a two-hour break for dinner, one hour for 15 moves (it will be remembered that, beginning in London 1883, modern double-sided clocks were used).

As was remarked on in the press, in appearance Steinitz was the complete opposite of Zukertort. The latter was a thin man, with a fine, spiritual face, set off by a short beard. Whereas Steinitz looked more like a representative of the business world than of an intellectual pursuit: a massive, thickset figure, with a resolute bearing, large round face, flat nose, deep-set eyes, uncombed, tousled beard, and enormous, mane-like reddish-brown sideburns. Perhaps their only common feature was their 'lively, burning eyes...'

The match began catastrophically for Steinitz: after winning the first game in excellent style, he then suffered four successive defeats (moreover, in the third game he completely outplayed his opponent strategically, and in the fourth he blundered a piece in a slightly better position). However, the future champion did not despair: such a start was not something he needed to become accustomed to... The match moved on to St Louis, where Steinitz immediately gained two wins, and the scores became closer: 3-4. In the eighth game the first draw was finally recorded. The tension had reached breaking point: now much depended on who won the next game...

Here it should be remembered that in this match Steinitz was fighting not only for the title of world champion, but also for the triumph of his principles. He had long since become aware that chess was subject to definite laws and that one should always play strictly according to a plan, taking into account the features of the specific position. And one should attack only if a sufficient number of small advantages has been accumulated, stemming from certain properties of the position (temporary or long-term), such as: lead in development, mobility of the pieces, seizure of the centre, position of the enemy king, weak squares in the opponent's position, superior pawn formation, pawn majority on the queenside, open lines, and the advantage of the two bishops.

Steinitz particularly valued such a stable feature as the pawn formation, studying three types of pawns (pinned, isolated and doubled), and also the weakness and strength not only of the pawns themselves, but also the neighbouring squares. In particular, he established that an isolated pawn in the centre is a weakness, a target for a systematic attack, and the square in front of it a convenient springboard for a minor piece, especially a knight. And it was in the match with Zukertort that a clear conception of how to play against the 'isolani' was first revealed!

One of the classic examples is the ninth game, in which Steinitz once again showed himself to be an outstanding master of defence.

Game 18

J.Zukertort-W.Steinitz

World Championship,
St Louis 1886, ninth game
Queen's Gambit Accepted D26

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3

In the seventh game after 4 e3 c5 5 ♘f3 ♘c6 6 a3 dxc4 7 ♗xc4 cxd4 8 exd4 ♗e7 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♗e3?! Steinitz demonstrated for the first time an exemplary arrangement of the forces for Black: 10...♗d7 11 ♕d3 (11 d5 equalises) 11...♖c8 12 ♖ac1?! ♕a5 13 ♗a2 ♖fd8 14 ♖fe1?! ♗e8! 15 ♗b1 g6 16 ♕e2 ♗f8 17 ♖ed1 ♗g7 18 ♗a2 ♘e7 with an excellent game.

4...dxc4 5 e3

More active is 5 e4!, and after 5...♗b4 6 ♗g5 c5 7 ♗xc4 the popular Vienna Variation is reached. Also possible is the trendy 5 ♕a4+ c6 (5...♘bd7 6 e4) 6 ♕xc4, as occasionally played by Karpov, and then also Kramnik.

5...c5

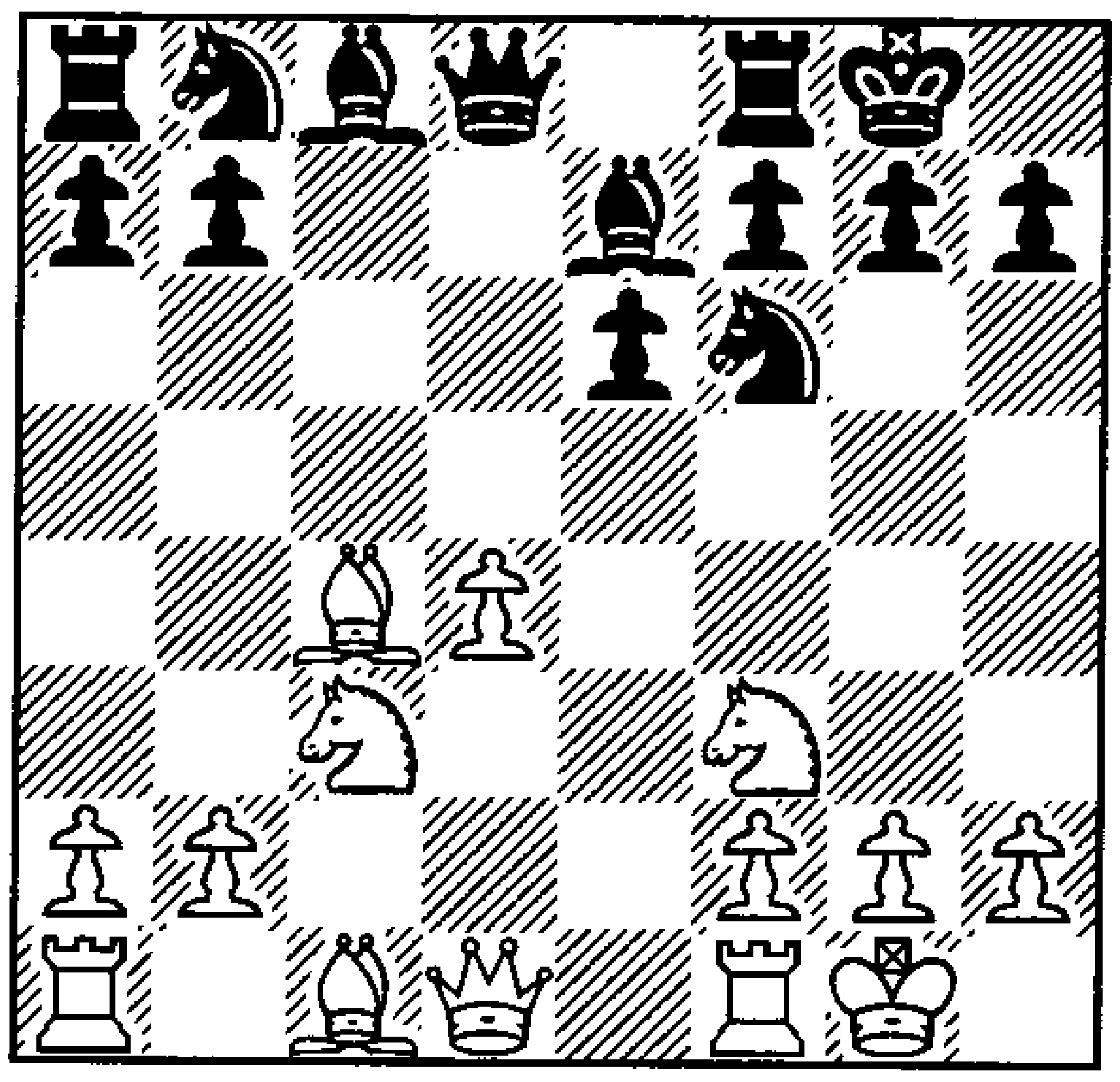
From the viewpoint of modern theory Black easily equalises by 5...a6! 6 a4 (6 ♗xc4 b5 7 ♗b3 ♗b7 is equal) 6...c5 7 ♗xc4 ♘c6 8 0-0 ♗e7, and in view of his premature Nc3 White is unable to defend his d4-pawn by ♕e2 and ♖d1, for example: 9 ♕e2 (9 dxc5 ♕xd1 10 ♖xd1 ♗xc5 is dead level) 9...cxd4 10 ♖d1 e5 11 exd4 exd4 12 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 13 ♕e5 ♕d6 with equality.

6 ♗xc4 cxd4

6...♘c6 is slightly more accurate, for the moment not opening the diagonal for the bishop at c1.

7 exd4 (7 ♘xd4 a6 is equal) **7...♗e7 8 0-0 0-0**

The first world champion also played 8...♘c6!, preventing ♕e2 by the attack on the d4-pawn. For example: 9 ♗f4 0-0 10 ♖e1 ♗d7 (10...♕b6!?) 11 ♕e2 ♕a5 (11...♖ac8!?) 12 ♘b5 a6 13 ♗c7 b6 14 ♘c3 ♖fc8 15 ♗f4 b5 16 ♗b3 ♕b6 17 ♖ed1 (17 d5!?) 17...♘a5! 18 ♗c2 ♘c4 with equal chances (Zukertort-Steinitz, USA 13th matchgame 1886), or 10 ♖c1 ♕b6 11 ♕d2 ♖d8 12 ♖fd1 ♗d7 13 ♕e2 ♗e8 14 ♗d3 ♖ac8 with equality (Pillsbury-Steinitz, St Petersburg 1895/96).



9 ♕e2 (9 ♘e5!?) **9...♘bd7?!**

Nevertheless better was 9...♘c6 10 ♖d1 ♘a5! 11 ♗d3 b6 and ...♗b7.

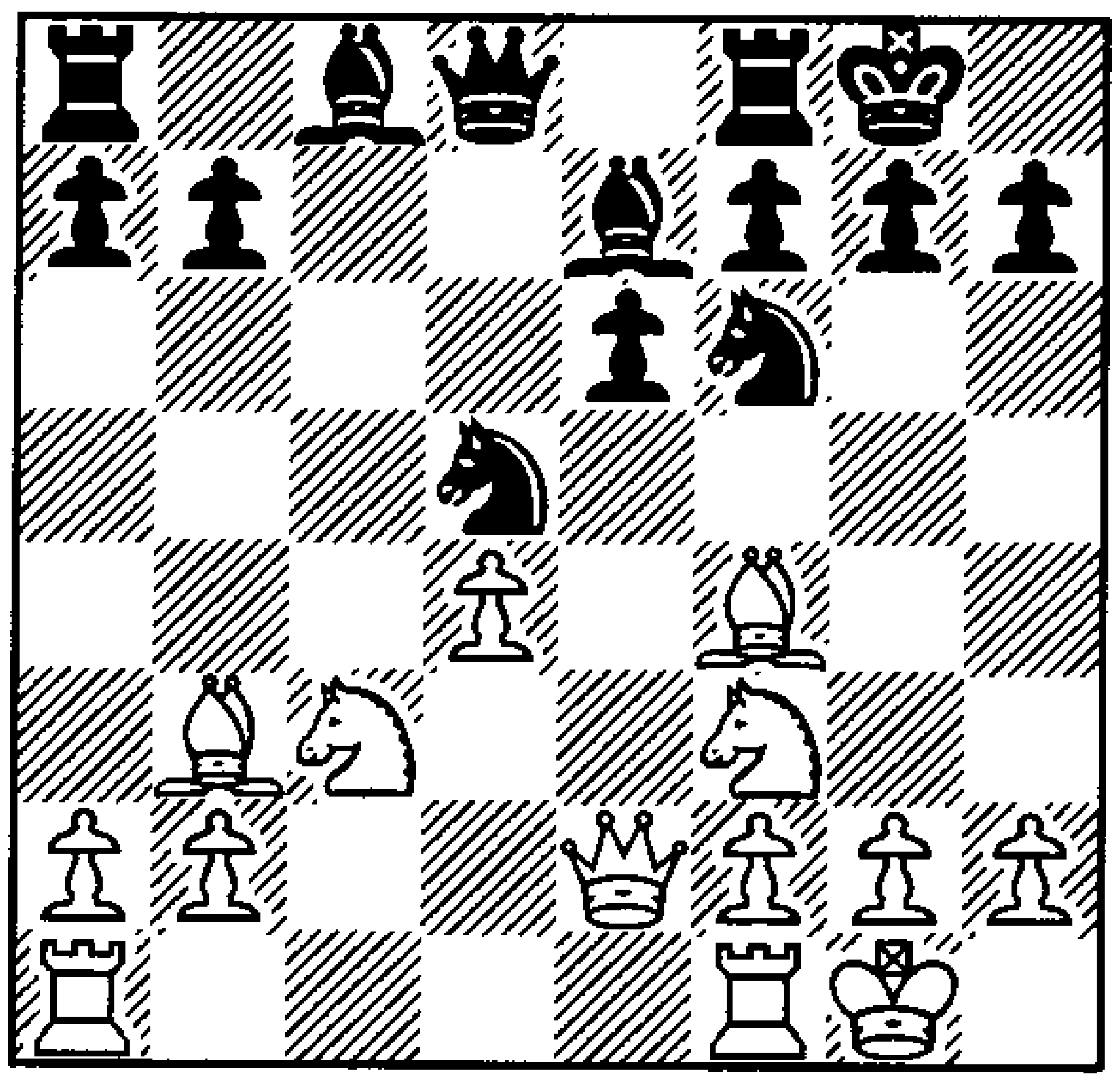
10 ♗b3

Zukertort does not even think about 10 d5 exd5 11 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 12 ♗xd5 ♘f6 13 ♗b3 ♗f5 14 ♖d1 ♕e8 15 ♘d4 ♗d7 with equal chances, since, in the words of Euwe, 'he by no means regards the d4-pawn as a minus of his position.'

10...♘b6 11 ♗f4

It is more competent to place the bishop on g5 (the battle for the d5-square!), and the simple 11 ♖d1 ♘bd5 12 ♗g5 ♕a5 13 ♖ac1 retains an enduring initiative. However, this only became clear much later, by the efforts of Botvinnik, who broke up Black's defences by ♘e5 and f2-f4-f5.

11...♘bd5



12 ♗g3

'It is hard to see any purpose, a logical sequence in Zukertort's moves. He simply puts his pieces on squares where they enjoy mobility and hopes for complications in which to exercise his talent for combination.' (Lasker) But even for Lasker and Euwe the positional battle around the 'isolani' largely remained 'terra incognita'.

12...♕a5 (a subtle nuance: with the bishop at g3 White is unable to harass the queen by ♗d2; the alternative was 12...b6!? and ...♗b7) **13 ♖ac1 ♗d7 14 ♘e5 ♖fd8 15 ♕f3**

15 ♘xd7 ♖xd7 and ...♖ad8 was unfavourable for White, but 15 f4 was interesting.

15...♗e8

A classical plan! 'The best square for the bishop in such positions: here it does not interfere with the manoeuvres of the other black pieces, and in addition it carries out the important function of defending f7.' (Euwe) It is obvious that White has lost his opening initiative and that he needs to concern himself with maintaining equality.

16 ♗h4!

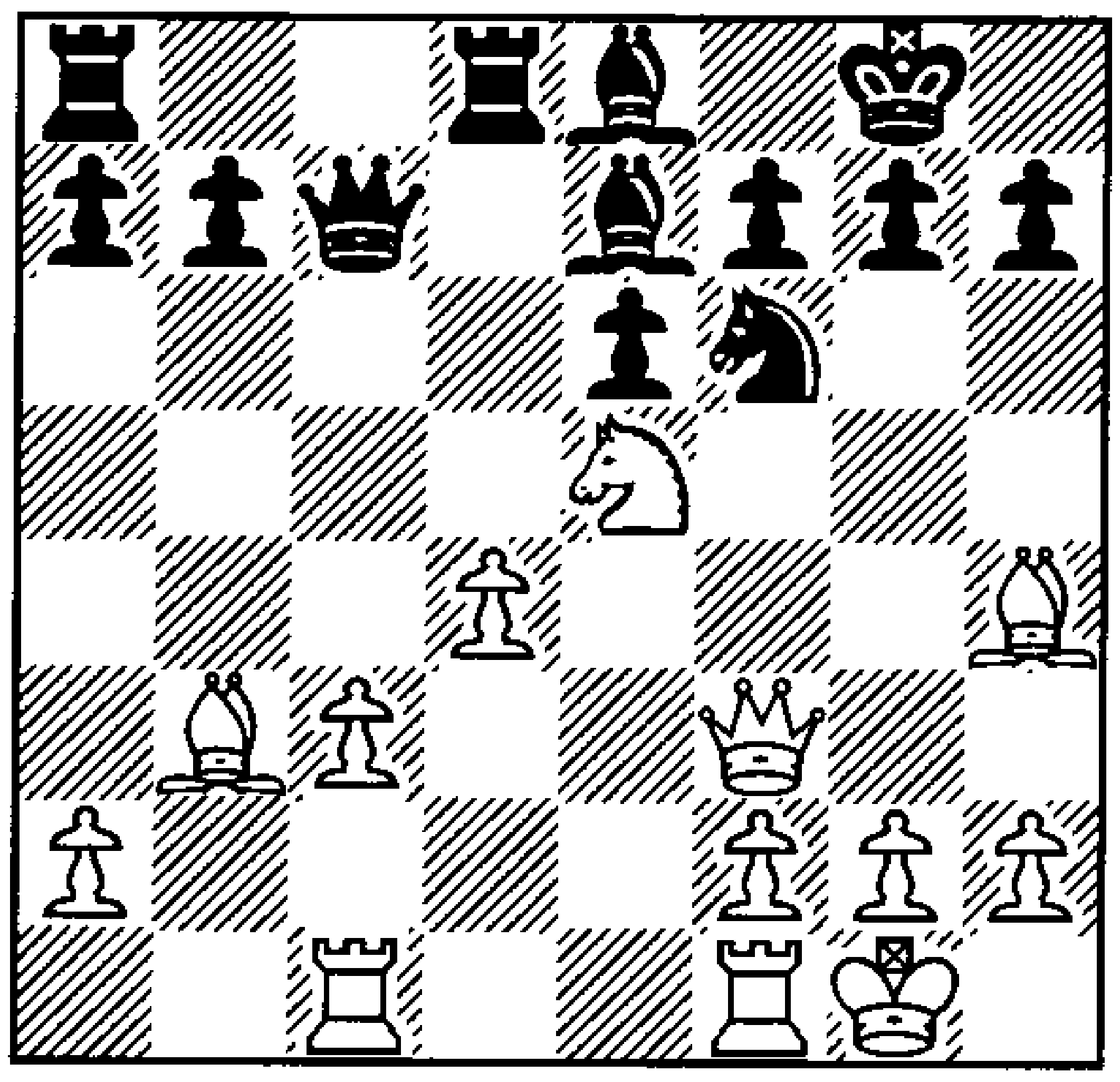
White finally hits on the idea of fighting for the d5-square. But during the time he has wasted, Black has solved the problem of his c8-bishop's development – virtually the main one in such set-ups. (According to other sources, the order of moves was 16 ♖fe1 ♖ac8 17 ♗h4 ♘xc3 18 bxc3 ♕c7.)

16...♘xc3

Such moves are not made without necessity: why relieve the opponent of his 'isolani'? But if 16...♖ac8?!, then 17 ♘xd5 is unpleasant, for example: 17...♘xd5 18 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 19 ♕xb7, or 17...exd5 18 ♘g4 ♖xc1 19 ♖xc1 ♖c8 20 ♖d1!

17 bxc3 ♕c7

'Defending the bishop at e7. The direct play for a blockade by 17...b5 was premature in view of 18 ♘g4.' (Neishtadt) The computer does not agree with this assessment: 18...♘xg4 19 ♕xg4 (19 ♗xe7? ♘xh2! 20 ♔xh2 ♕c7+ 21 ♔g1 ♕xe7) 19...♗xh4 20 ♕xh4 ♗c6 21 f4 ♕a3 with equal chances.



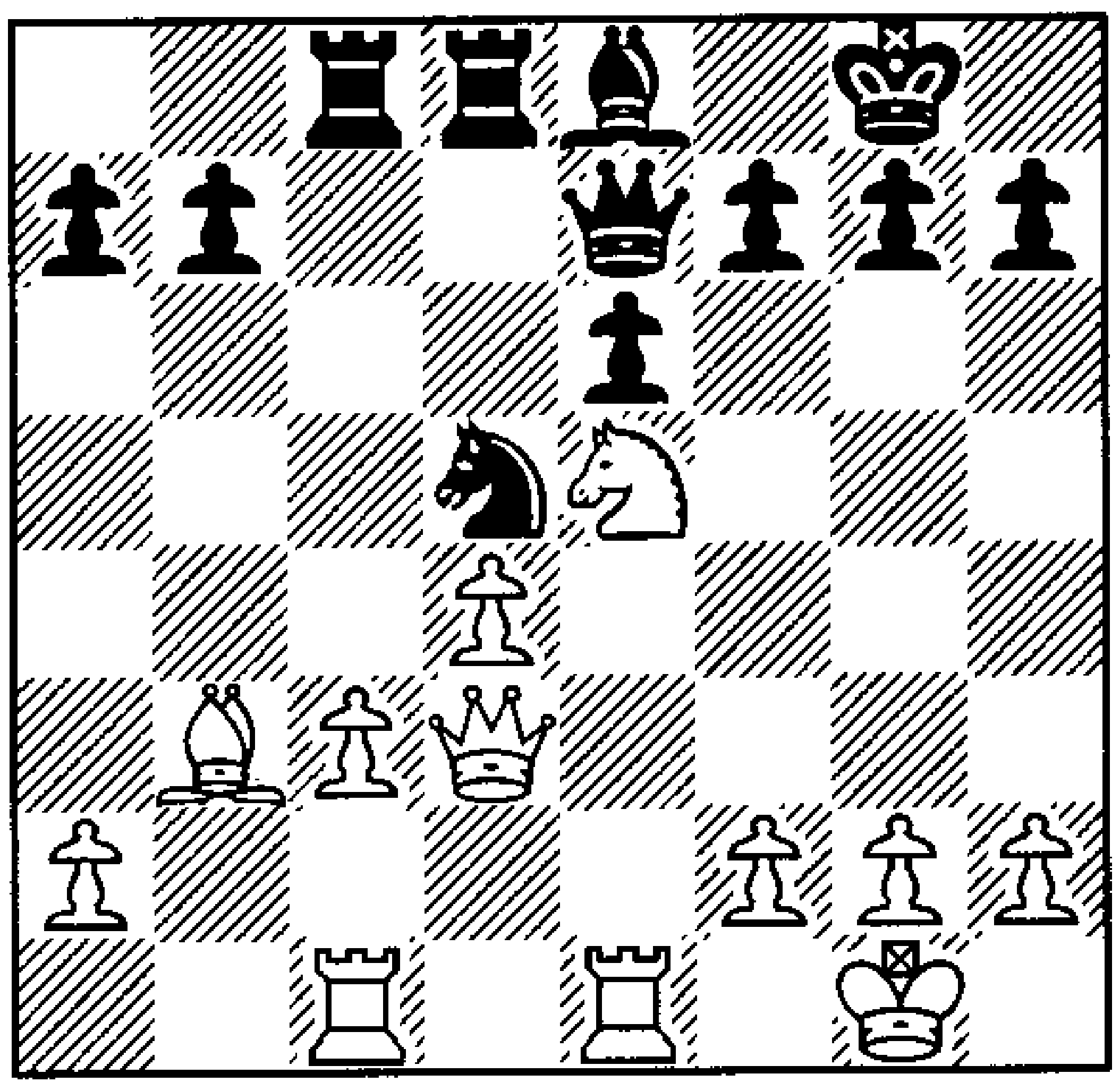
18 ♖fe1 ♖ac8 19 ♕d3?!

An aimless move. Zukertort does not realise that weak hanging pawns must be advanced, and then they can become strong! 19 ♗g3 was correct, and if 19...♗d6, then 20 c4 – Lasker considered this position unclear, but in my opinion it favours White: 20...♘d7 21 ♘xd7 ♖xd7 22 d5! ♗xg3 23 hxg3 exd5 24 ♕e3 ♕d8 25 cxd5 with a powerful passed pawn in the centre (the strength of which was then not yet appreciated!). Therefore 19...♕b6! was better, with double-edged play.

19...♘d5!

Immediately inducing exchanges: the fewer the pieces, the more obvious the weakness of the hanging pawns.

20 ♗xe7 (20 ♗g3 ♕a5!?; possible was 20 ♗c2 g6 21 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 22 ♗b3 b5! 23 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 24 ♕e3 with counterplay thanks to the weakness of the dark squares and the rather passive bishop at e8) **20...♕xe7**



21 ♗xd5?

A fundamental positional mistake: before ...g7-g6 has been played, White should not take on d5! 'White should have retained this excellent bishop, but in pursuit of forcing moves and combinations associated with them he even gives up his strong pieces.' (Lasker) 21 ♗c2 ♘f6 (21...♕h4!?) 22 ♘g4 g6 23 ♘e5 was unclear, but the most logical (connected pawns must be advanced!) was 21 c4! ♘f6 (21...♕g5?! 22 h4!) 22 ♖cd1 with chances for both sides.

21...♖xd5 22 c4 ♖dd8 23 ♖e3?

Play at the level of that time: an attempt to attack the king with inadequate means. What kind of attack is possible here? 'White should have played 23 ♖ed1 and then possibly ♕b3, c4-c5 and ♘c4-d6.' (Euwe) But after 23...b6 Black has a comfortable game. Therefore I would prefer to sharpen the play by 23 d5!? b5 (this is what Steinitz had in mind) 24 ♕h3!

23...♕d6 24 ♖d1

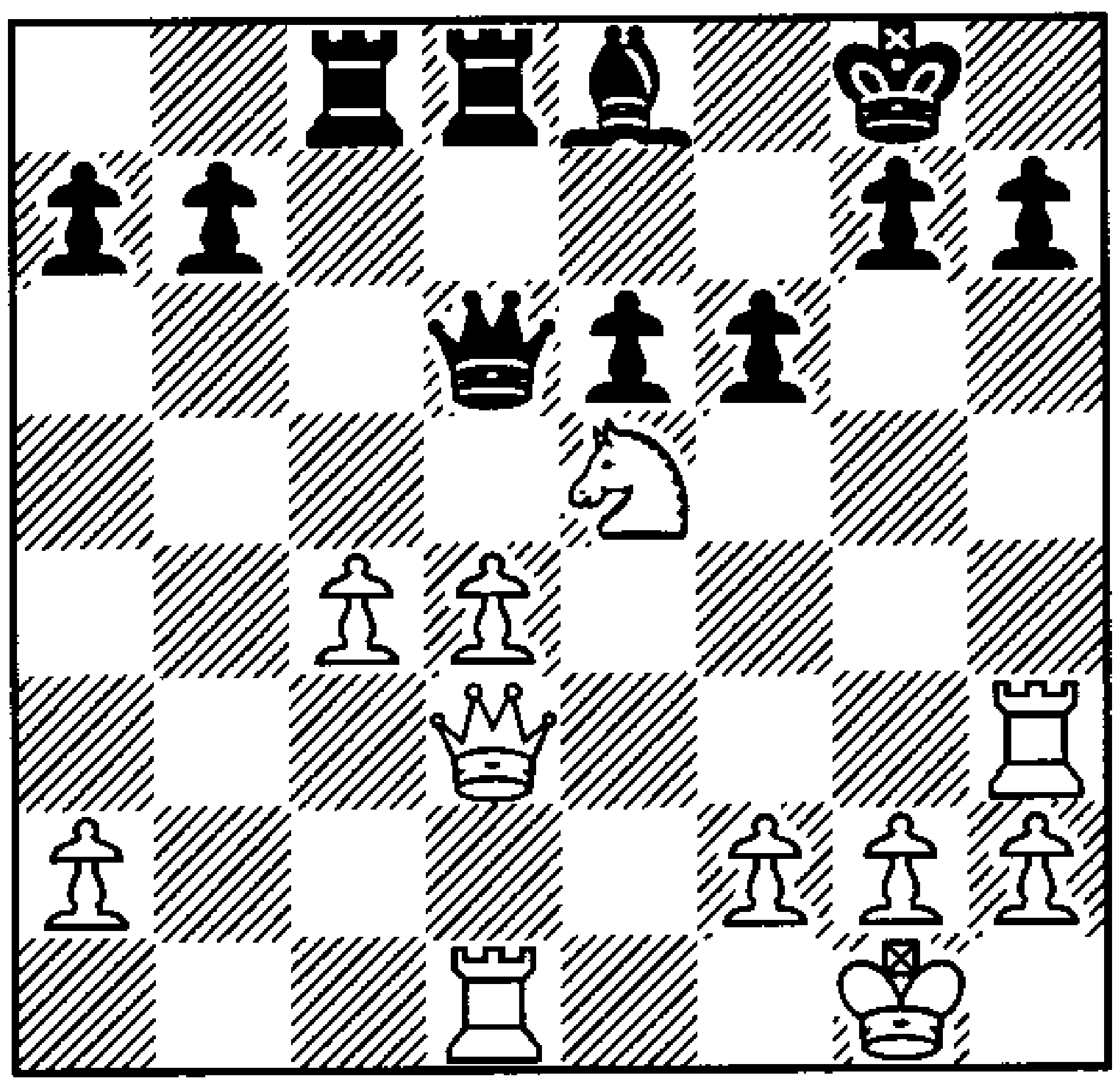
The trappy 24 ♖h3!? can be met by 24...h6! (but not 24...♕xd4? 25 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 26 ♖e3!) 25 ♖d1 f6 26 ♘g4 ♕f4, transposing into a position from the game.

24...f6

The consequence of the b3-bishop being exchanged: now the bishop at e8 can come out to g6 or h5.

25 ♖h3!?

'In search of a combination.' (Lasker) In fact, White is in trouble: in the event of 25 ♘f3 ♕a6! (25...♗h5 26 ♕b3 b6 27 h3 is not so clear) 26 ♘d2 e5 27 d5 ♕xa2 he has no compensation for the material deficit.



25...h6!

Parrying all the threats and beginning to seize the initiative. There was no point in Steinitz going in for the dangerous complications after 25...fxe5?! 26 ♕xh7+ ♔f8. For example:

1) 27 ♖f3+ ♗f7 28 ♕h5 (Neishtadt recommended 28 ♕h8+ ♔e7 29 ♕xg7 ♖f8 30 ♖b1 b6 31 dxe5 'with an attack', but after 31...♕d4 there is insufficient compensation

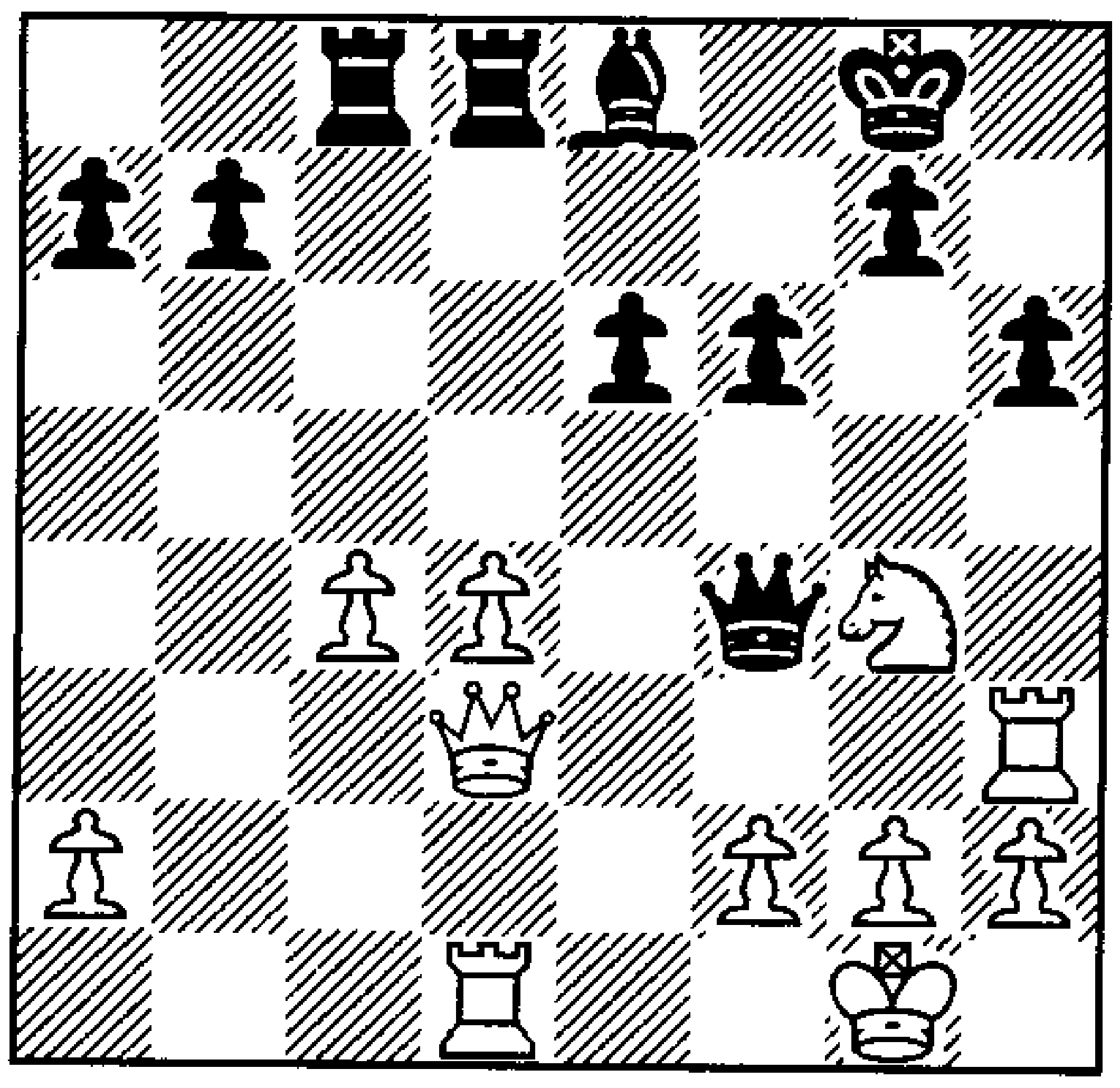
for the piece) 28...♖c7 (28...♕d7 29 ♕h8+ ♔e7 30 ♕h4+ with perpetual check; 28...♖d7? 29 ♕h8+) 29 c5 ♕d5 30 ♕h8+ ♔e7 31 ♕h4+ (but not 31 ♕xg7? ♖f8 32 h4 ♕xf3! and wins) with a draw;

2) 27 ♖g3!? Bad here are both 27...♖c7? 28 ♕h8+ ♔e7 29 c5! (29 ♖xg7+ ♗f7 30 ♕h5 leads to a draw) 29...♕d5 30 ♖xg7+ ♗f7 31 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 32 ♕h7+ ♔f6 33 ♕xc7 exd4 34 ♖d3, and 27...♗f7? 28 ♖xg7 ♖c7 29 c5 ♕d7 (29...♕xc5? 30 ♕h8+ ♔e7 31 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 32 ♕h5+ ♔e7 33 dxc5) 30 ♕h8+ (30 ♖d3!? Ravinsky) 30...♔e7 31 ♕h4+ ♔e8 32 ♖h7!, and there only remains the 'machine' move 27...♖d7! 28 ♕h8+ ♔e7 29 ♕h4+ (29 ♖xg7+? ♔d8 30 ♖xd7+ ♔xd7 31 ♕g7+ ♔d8 32 ♕g5+ ♔c7 favours Black) 29...♔f7 30 ♕h7 with a draw.

26 ♘g4

Unfavourable is 26 ♘g6 ♗xg6 27 ♕xg6 ♖xc4, and if 28 ♖xh6 ♕xd4! 29 ♕h7+ ♔f8 30 ♕h8+ ♔f7 31 ♕xd8 ♕xd8 and wins. Zukertort is hoping to sacrifice his knight on f6 or h6, but Black's next reply kills this idea.

26...♕f4!



27 ♘e3

If 27 ♖g3 Steinitz was planning 27...b5!, when 28 cxb5? is bad in view of 28...♖xd4! 29 ♘xh6+ ♔f8 30 ♕a3+ ♕d6.

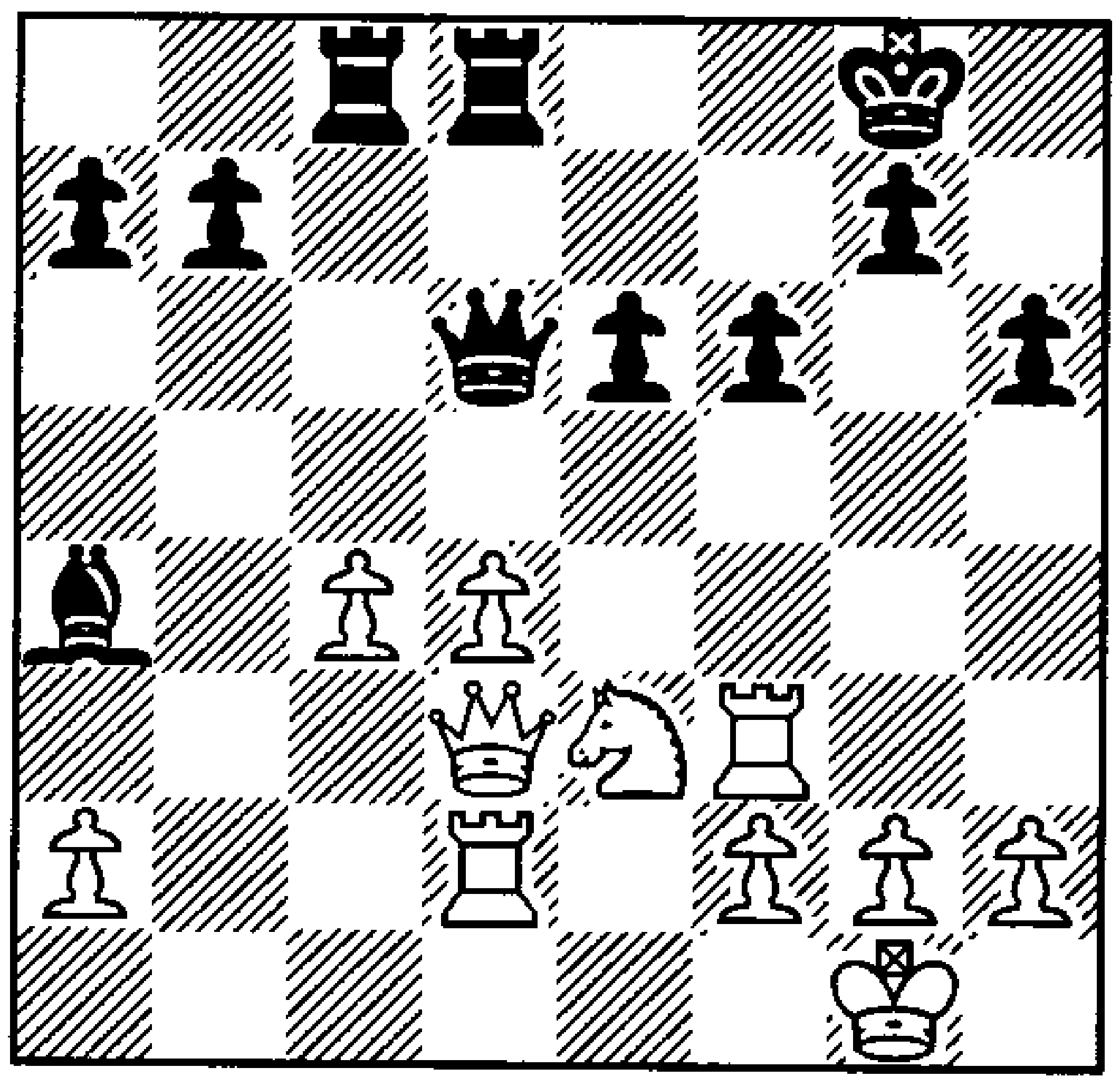
27...♗a4!

'To force the rook from the first rank, which will soon be seized by Black.' (Lasker)

28 ♖f3?

None of the commentators noticed a better chance – 28 ♖d2! b5 29 ♖f3 (but not 29 cxb5? ♖c1+ 30 ♘f1 ♗xb5 or 30 ♘d1 ♕xd2 winning) 29...♕b8! (29...bxc4? 30 ♕a3; 29...♕c7 30 c5 e5 31 ♘f5 exd4 32 ♖g3 ♕xc5 33 ♖xg7+ ♔f8 34 g4 ♕c1+ 35 ♔g2 ♗c2 36 ♖xc2 ♕xc2 37 ♕f3 ♕xf5 38 ♕xf5 ♔xg7 39 h4 d3 40 h5 leads to a draw) 30 ♕g6! (Steinitz only considered 30 cxb5? ♖c1+ 31 ♘d1 e5! winning) 30...♔h8 (30...bxc4? 31 ♘g4!) 31 ♖g3 (inferior is 31 ♖xf6?! ♖c7!! 32 ♖xe6 bxc4) 31...♕b7 32 c5 b4!, and although Black has the advantage, there is still a lot of play to come.

28...♕d6 29 ♖d2 (29 ♖xf6? ♗xd1 wins)



29...♗c6?

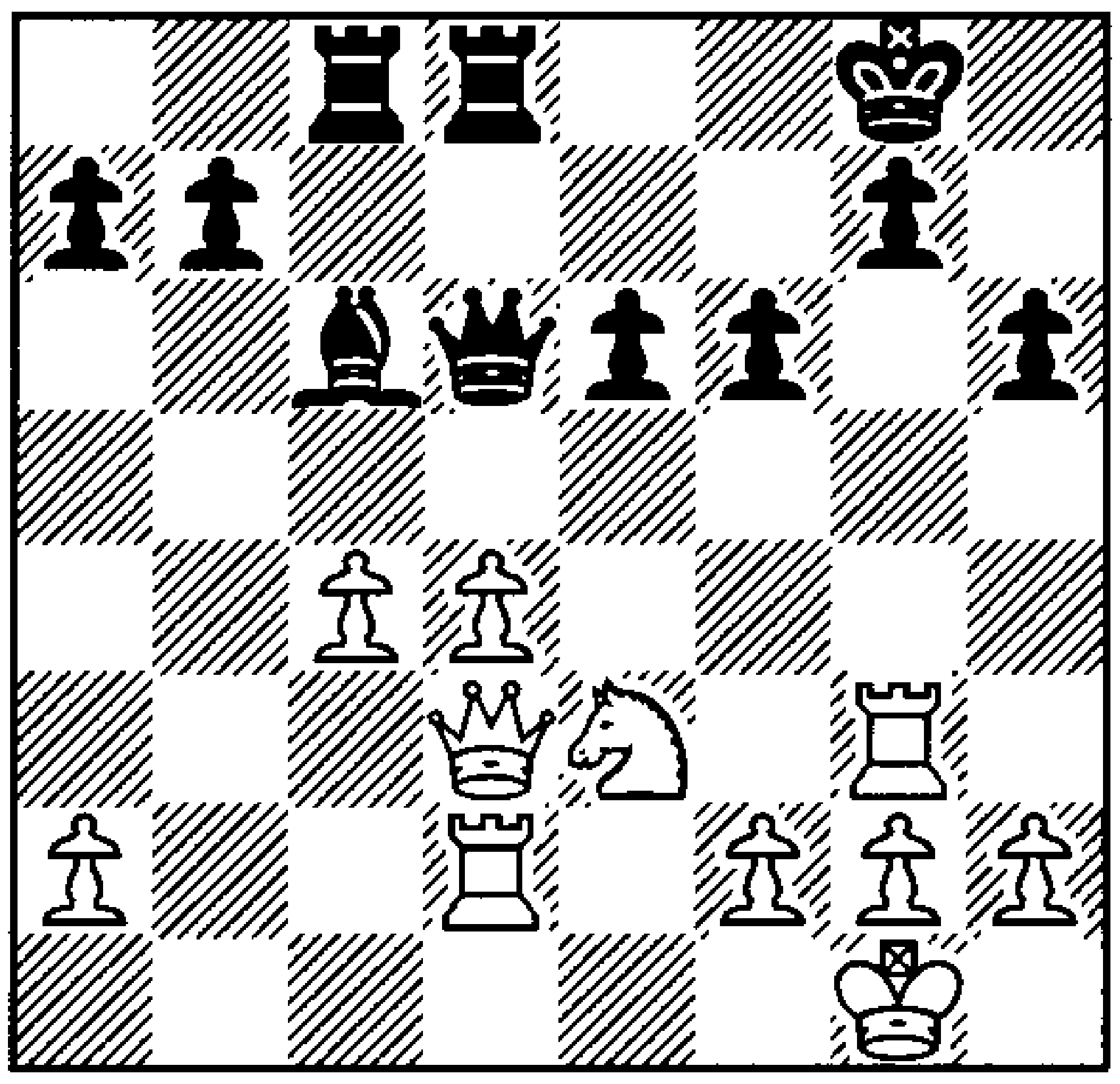
As it transpires from the note to the following move, this is a serious mistake. Much stronger was the tactical blow 29...b5! suggested by Vukovic. Now White loses after 30 cxb5? ♖c1+ 31 ♘f1 (31 ♘d1 ♕xd4! 32 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 33 ♖xd4 ♗xd1) 31...♕b4, or 30 ♖g3? bxc4 31 ♕g6 ♕f8 32 ♘g4 ♔h8 33 ♘xh6 ♗e8! 34 ♘f7+ ♕xf7, or 30 h3 bxc4 31 ♘xc4 ♕b4 32 ♘e3 ♗b5 33 a3 ♕a5. And even after the best continuation 30 ♕g6 ♕e7 31 ♖h3 ♕f7 all the chances are on Black's side.

30 ♖g3?

A mistake in reply, and this time a fatal one. Also bad was 30 ♖xf6? gxf6 31 ♕g6+ ♔f8 32 ♕xf6+ ♔e8. But 30 d5! suggests itself. 'Steinitz thought that this would be refuted by 30...exd5 31 cxd5 ♗xd5 32 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 33

♕xd5+ ♖xd5. But instead of 31 cxd5, stronger is 31 ♘f5!, for example: 31...♕e5? 32 ♖e3 ♕a1+ 33 ♖d1 (33...♕xa2 34 ♘xh6+!), 31...♕d7? 32 ♖g3 dxc4 33 ♘xh6+ ♔h8 (33...♔f8 34 ♕h7) 34 ♕g6 ♖e8 35 h4 wins, or 31...♕f8 32 ♖g3 dxc4 (*Black can save the game by 32...♖d7! 33 ♘xh6+ ♔h8 34 ♘g4 ♖e8! 35 ♘e3 dxc4 36 ♕xc4 ♕f7 37 ♖h3+ ♔g8 38 ♕h4 ♕g6 39 ♕c4+ ♕f7 with equality – G. K.*) 33 ♘xh6+ ♔h8 (33...♔f8 34 ♕h7) 34 ♕g6 ♖e8 35 h4 and wins or 31...♕f8 32 ♖g3 dxc4 33 ♘xh6+ ♔h8 34 ♕xd8! ♖xd8 35 ♖xd8 ♕xd8 36 ♘f7+. Therefore correct is 30...♕e5! 31 ♖g3 (if 31 ♘c2 or 31 ♘f1, then ultra-calmly 31...exd5) 31...exd5 32 ♕g6 ♖c7 and ...♗e8 (of course, not 33 ♕xh6? on account of 33...♕xg3!).' (Euwe)

In the variation 30 d5! ♕e5! the computer introduces its corrections: 31 ♕f1! exd5 32 cxd5 ♗d7 leads to a rather complicated position, in which White can defend himself at the cost of the initiative. Whereas 30 ♖g3? runs up against a wall.



30...f5!

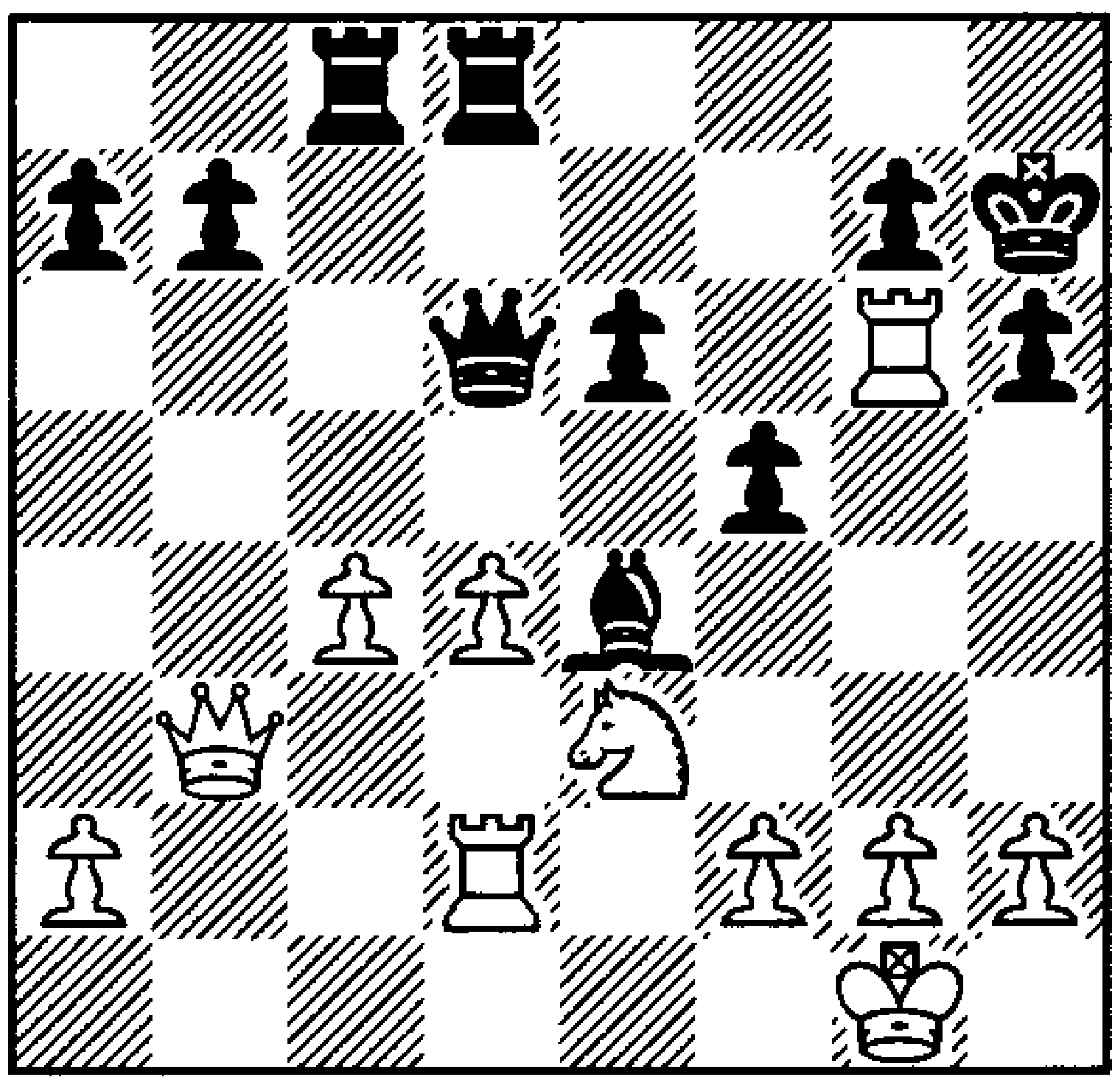
This reply, effectively deciding the game, was underestimated by Zukertort.

31 ♖g6?

A coffee-house move! There was more sense in 31 c5 (31 ♖h3!?) 31...♕e7 32 ♘c4 (or 32 f4 ♗e4 33 ♕e2 ♕f6 34 ♕f2! b6) 32...♗b5 33 a4 ♗xc4 34 ♕xc4 ♖xc5 35 dxc5 ♖xd2 36 h3 with an indifferent, but not yet totally ruined position.

31...♗e4 32 ♕b3 ♔h7

Not 32...f4? 33 c5 fxe3 34 cxd6 exd2 35 ♕xe6+ ♔h7 36 ♖xh6+ gxh6 37 ♕f7+ ♔h8 38 ♕f6+ ♔g8 39 ♕e6+ ♔g7 40 ♕e7+ with perpetual check, but 32...♔f7! 33 c5 ♕e7 34 ♖g3 f4 35 ♖g4 fxe3 would have won calmly.



33 c5 ♖xc5 34 ♖xe6

Or 34 ♕xe6 ♖c1+ 35 ♘d1 (35 ♘f1 ♕xe6 36 ♖xe6 ♗d5 37 ♖e7 ♗c4) 35...♕f8! (35...♕xe6 36 ♖xe6 ♗d5 37 ♖e1 ♗xa2 38 ♖xa2 ♖xd4 Steinitz) 36 ♖g3 ♗c2 37 ♕e2 ♕e8 38 ♔f1 f4 all of which are winning for Black.

34...♖c1+ 35 ♘d1?

More tenacious was 35 ♘f1, when there is a choice between 35...♕f4 36 ♕e3 ♕c7! and the immediate 35...♕c7, for example: 36 ♖d1 ♖xd1 37 ♕xd1 ♕d7 38 ♖e5 ♕xd4 39 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 40 f3 ♗c6 41 ♘e3 f4 42 ♘f5 ♖d2 43 ♖e7 ♔g6 and Black has a won endgame.

35...♕f4 36 ♕b2 ♖b1 37 ♕c3 ♖c8 38 ♖xe4 ♕xe4 0-1

The game is a very uneven one, and it is hard to annotate from the standpoint of the 21st century: by present-day standards it contains too many mistakes. But it should be remembered that even the best players of that time progressed in the opening and the middlegame purely intuitively, groping their way. And Steinitz was clearly superior to his opponent in positional play, in his understanding of the strength and weakness of central pawns.

Nothing was then known about this, and objectively the game played a colossal role in the development of chess understanding. It needed nearly half a century and the appearance of Botvinnik for positions with an 'isolani' to be reassessed in favour of White, and then nearly another 30 years and the appearance of Petrosian, for the Queen's Gambit Accepted to again become a popular opening and for players to begin relating to the 'isolani' without emotion, seeing in it both minuses and pluses. And now there prevails a concrete and complex approach, based on a gigantic amount of processed information...

In the match too the ninth game played an enormous role. The scores became level (+4 -4 =1), and although in the event of a 9-9 score the players had agreed to continue playing to a further eight wins, the play was now all one way. In New Orleans, with the score standing at 5-7 and after failing to win the almost won 17th game and losing the 18th, Zukertort completely collapsed, and within two more games Steinitz was celebrating overall victory: +10 -5 =5. The first official champion of the world had emerged.

The press greeted Steinitz's triumph coolly: it was said that Zukertort was 'not at all himself', that there were rather a lot of blunders and, by contrast, little in the way of brilliance. They remembered with delight the times of Morphy and Anderssen, completely ignoring the path that chess had taken over a quarter of a century, forgetting that Steinitz and Zukertort played an order of magnitude stronger that any opponent of their legendary predecessors, and therefore their internecine clash, like many subsequent battles for the crown, demanded incomparably greater nervous tension...

But why did Zukertort 'burn up' so quickly? It seems to me that after the first third of the match Steinitz had fully adapted to him, adjusted to his playing style and discovered his own (which was not easy: Zukertort was after all an excellent practitioner) – and he could now do with him what he wanted, playing chess that was incomprehensible to his opponent! And gradually Zukertort lost his nerve. and a feeling of hopelessness arose: he simply did not know what to do with Steinitz...

Many years later Lasker called this match 'an event which decided the outcome of the battle between the combinative and positional schools,' and gave a very clear description of it: 'How novel, how surprising, how opposed to every sentiment of his time the conceptions of Steinitz must have been becomes manifest when playing over the games of the greatest match won by him, the one against Zukertort. Zukertort relied on combinations, and in that field he was a discoverer, a genius. For all that, in the majority of the games of the match, though he had lost none of his faculty, he was unable to make use of it. Steinitz seemed to have the mysterious capacity for divining combinations long before they were realisable on the board, to encourage combinations favourable to himself and to forestall those which were unfavourable. Zukertort could not understand how Steinitz was able to prevent combinations nor how he could win by such a method, since up to that time – this seemed to Zukertort indisputable – games, fairly won, had been won by fine combinations. Zukertort tried for four years to solve this riddle, but he never approached its solution by even one step, and he lost the mastery that he possessed into the bargain. He died a comparatively young man (*of a stroke at the age of 46 – G. K.*). And thus it is not to be wondered at that the chess world did not understand Steinitz, neither his manner of play nor his written word which treated of his "modern school".'

Chigorin – The First Challenger

In 1888 the rich Havana Chess Club, with which Steinitz had good relations, invited the champion to choose his most worthy opponent and to play the next match for the world championship in Cuba. Steinitz immediately agreed, and without any hesitation named Chigorin.

At that time the great Russian master Mikhail Ivanovich Chigorin (1850-1908) still had only a short service record, but he was the most difficult, the most dangerous opponent for the champion: in Vienna 1882 he had drawn 1-1 with Steinitz, and in London 1883 he had won both games against him! In addition he spoke out as a fundamental critic and opponent of Steinitz, who, in turn, called him 'a genius of practical play, who regards it as his privilege at every convenient opportunity to challenge the principles of modern chess theory.' Chigorin played in sharp combinative style, he was a virtuoso of various gambits, and later, when a whole generation of followers of the new school came into the arena, he won fame as 'the last chess romantic'.

Mikhail Ivanovich learned chess at the age of 16, and began playing seriously only when he was 24, in the well-known Dominik Café in St Petersburg. For the sake of chess he gave up his job and from 1876 he edited the magazine *Shakhmatny Listok* (and in the mid-80s *Shakhmatny Vestnik*). After winning matches against the leading Russian masters, he became the strongest player in the country for a quarter of a century. He was distinguished by an amazingly vivid, but nevertheless, unusual style of play.

Game 19

M.Chigorin-E.Schiffers

Match, St Petersburg 1879

Ruy Lopez C68

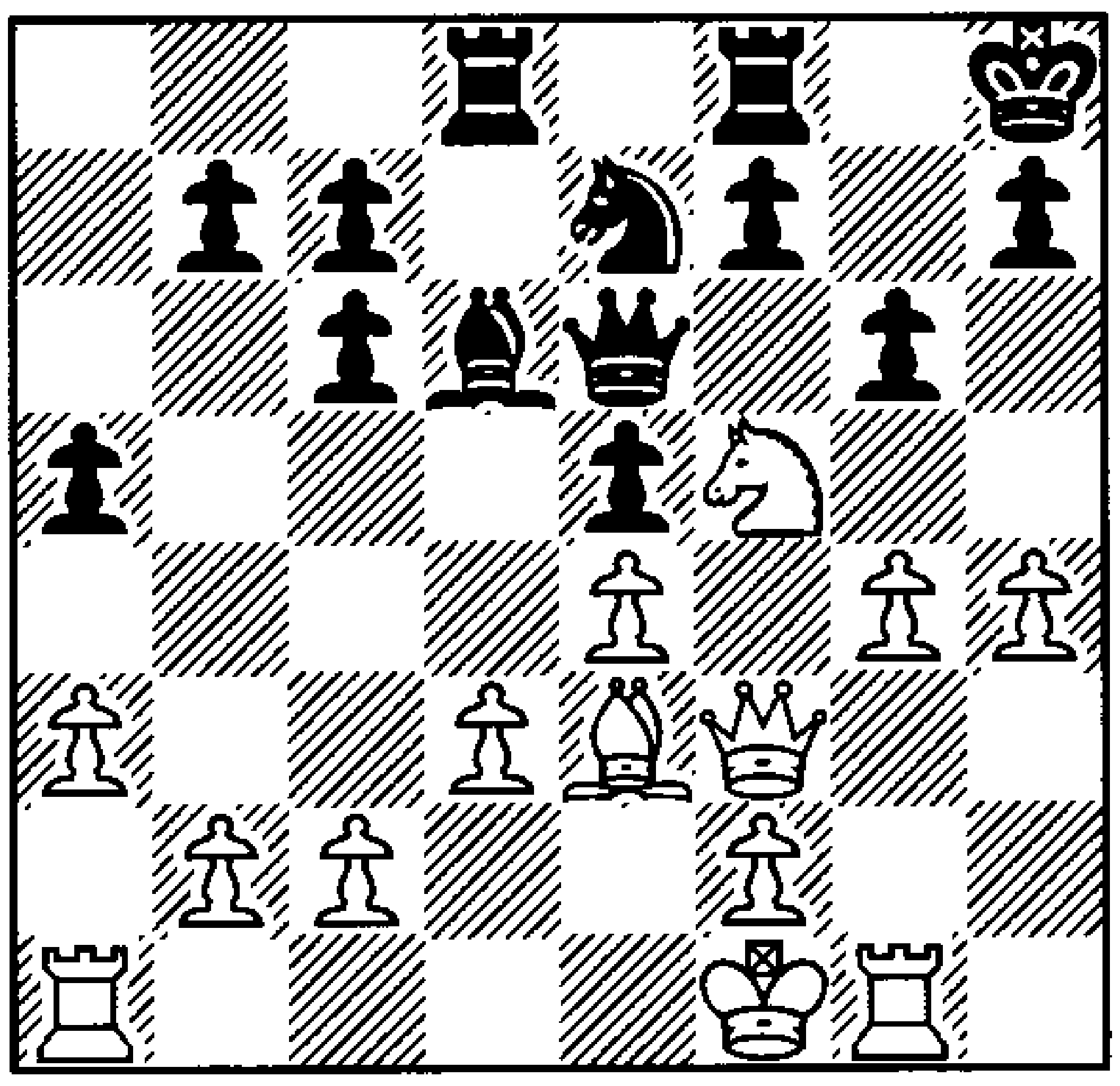
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗xc6

This is much drier than Chigorin's beloved Evans Gambit, but even here, as it turns out, it is possible to stir up trouble.

4...dxc6 5 ♘c3 ♗c5 6 d3 ♗g4 7 h3 ♗xf3 8 ♕xf3 ♘e7 9 ♘e2 0-0 10 g4!? ♕d7 11 ♗e3 ♗b4+ 12 ♔f1!?

Together with 10 g4, this is an original way of preparing an attack.

12...♖ad8 13 ♘g3 ♕e6 14 h4 a5 15 ♖g1 ♔h8 16 ♘f5 g6 17 a3 ♗d6



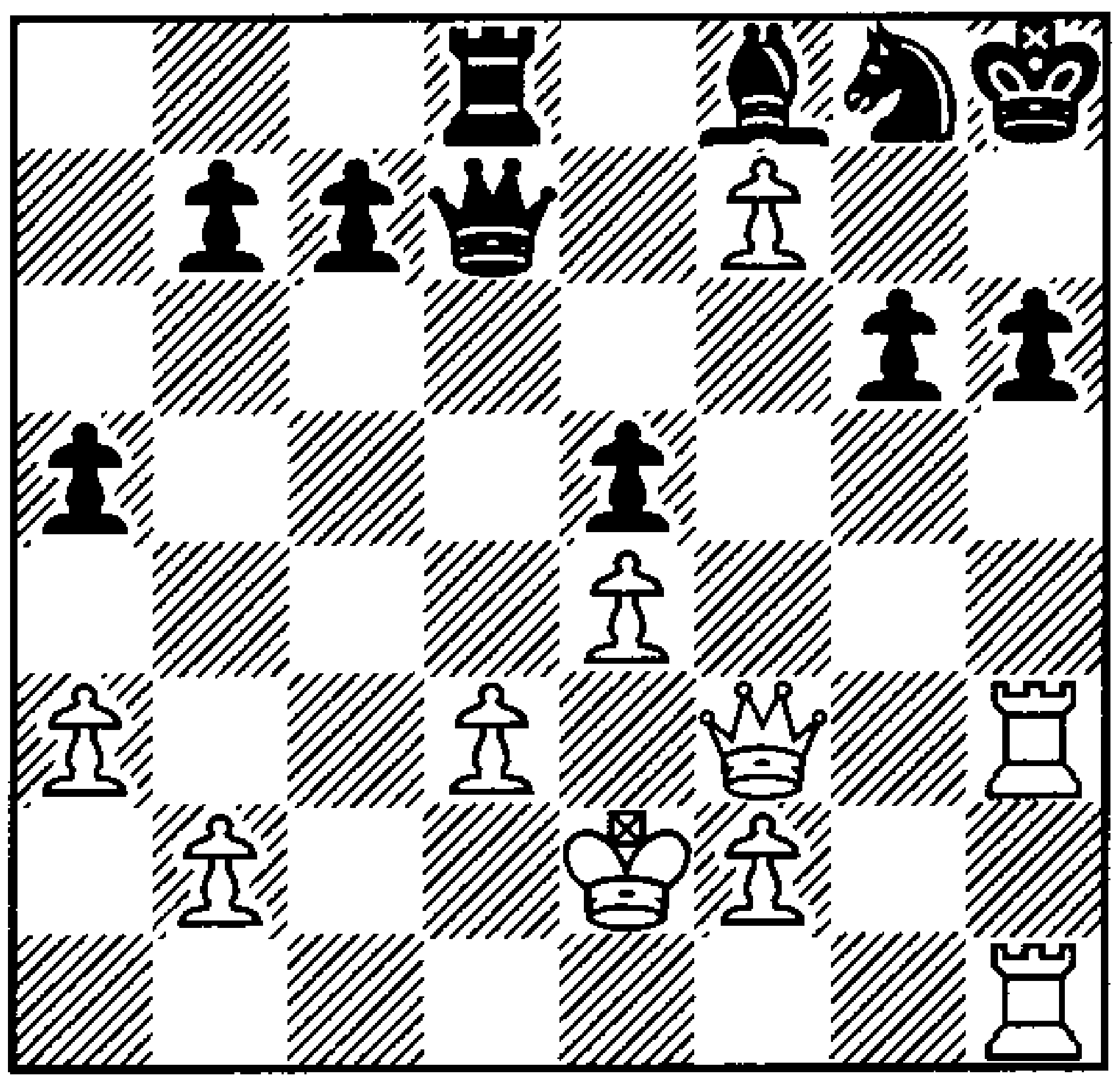
18 ♔e2!

This very modern knight sacrifice is an example of Chigorin's paradoxical thinking.

18...gxf5?! (18...c5!? with the idea of ...c5-c4 is more cautious) **19 gxf5 ♕d7 20 ♗h6!?**

Perhaps Schiffers was hoping for 20 ♕g4 ♘xf5 21 ♕xf5 ♕xf5 22 exf5 with a very slightly better endgame for White. But Chigorin does not fritter away his advantage.

20...♖g8 21 ♗g5 ♖xg5 22 hxg5 c5 23 ♖h1 ♘g8 24 f6 ♗f8 25 ♖h3 c4! 26 ♖ah1 cxd3+ 27 cxd3 (27 ♕xd3 h6) **27...h6 28 g6 fxg6 29 f7**



29...♘e7??

The computer records this as a blunder. After 29...♕d4! 30 fxg8♕+ ♔xg8 it was still possible to resist: 31 ♖g3 ♕xb2+ 32 ♔f1 ♖d6 33 ♕f5 ♔g7 34 ♖hg1 ♕c1+ 35 ♔g2 ♕f4 36

♕c8 ♕f7 etc.

30 ♖xh6+ ♗xh6 31 f8♕+ ♖xf8 32 ♕xf8+ ♘g8 33 ♖xh6+ 1-0

After his debut in the world arena (Berlin 1881: 1. Blackburne; 2. Zukertort; 3-4 Winawer and Chigorin) Chigorin won universal recognition. 'His combinations are very clever,' wrote Zukertort. 'With one leap he has joined the ranks of international masters.'

In the spring of 1889, returning home from his first match with Steinitz (their duels will be described below), Chigorin shared 1st-2nd place at an important tournament in New York, the longest in the history of chess (64 days: a double-round event with 20 players), where he played one of his best-known games.

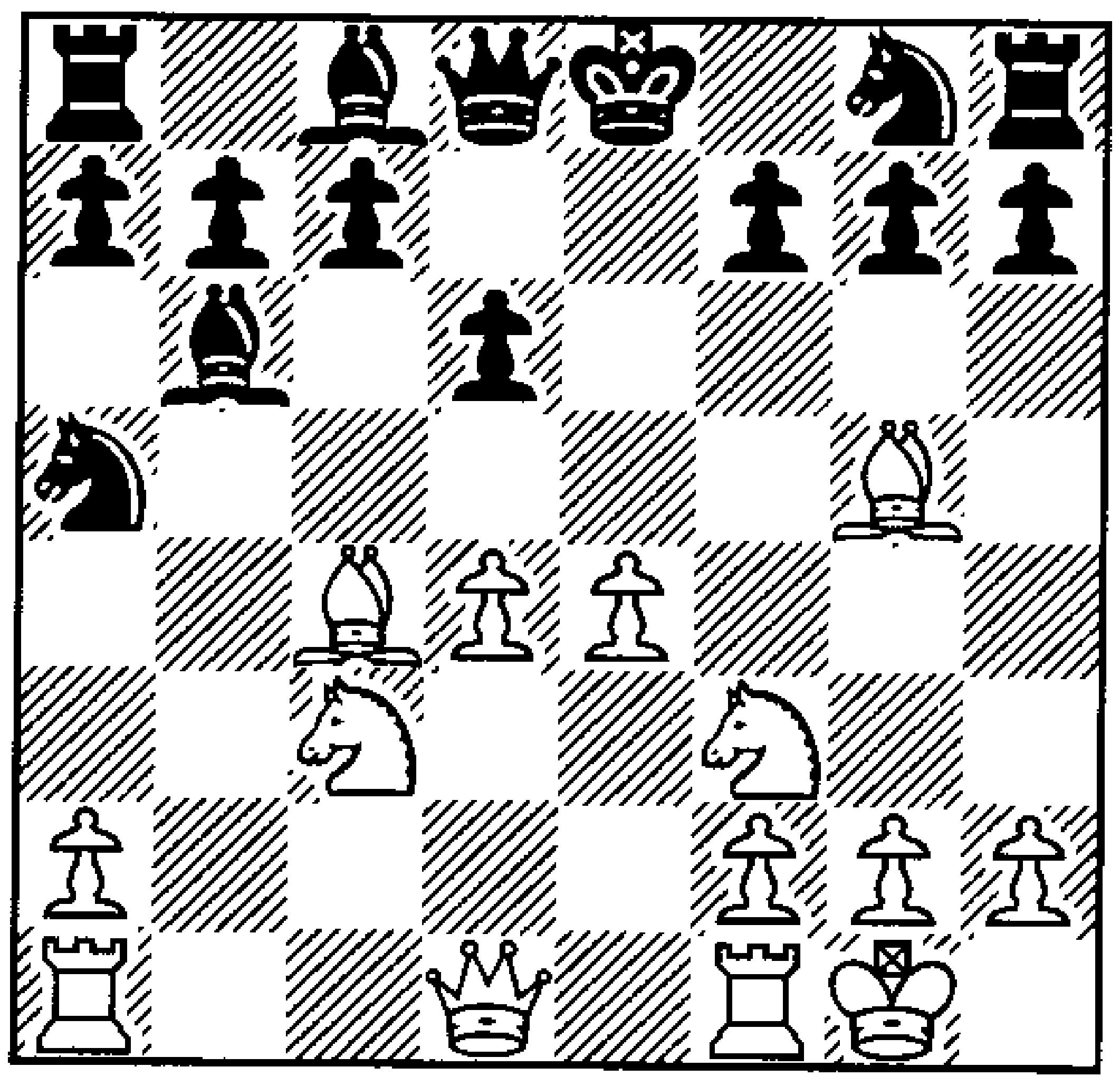
Game 20

M.Chigorin-W.Pollock

Sixth American Congress, New York 1889

Evans Gambit C51

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 b4 ♗xb4 5 c3 ♗c5?! (5...♗a5; 5...♗e7) **6 0-0** (6 d4!) **6...d6 7 d4 exd4?!** (7...♗b6! – *Game No.43*) **8 cxd4 ♗b6 9 ♘c3 ♘a5 10 ♗g5!**

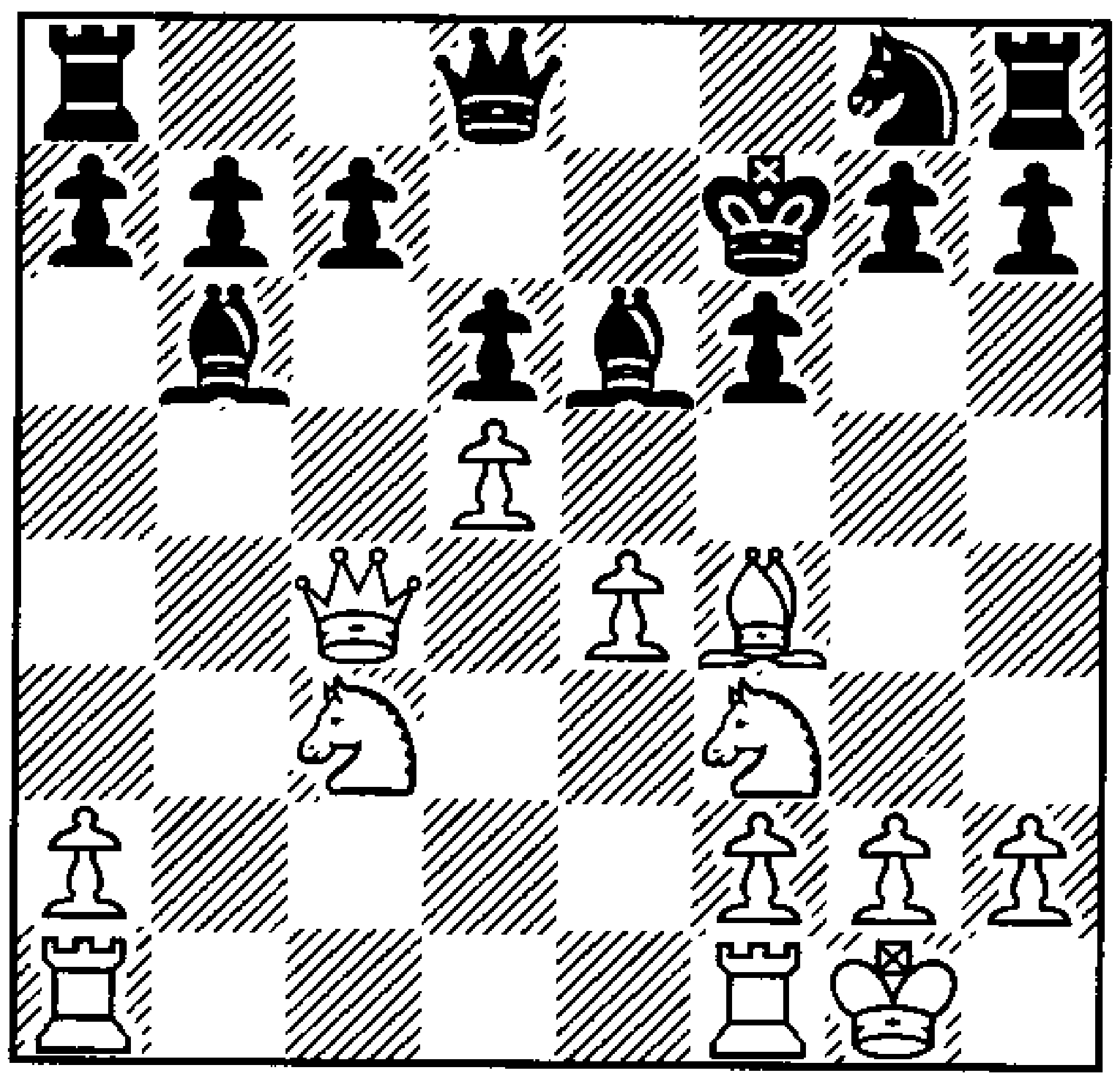


This, the 'Göring Attack' was a *tabiya* of Mikhail Chigorin, his favourite position.

10...f6 11 ♗f4!?

Less convincing is 11 ♗h4 ♘xc4 12 ♕a4+ ♕d7 13 ♕xc4 ♕f7 14 ♘d5 ♘h6 (Chigorin-Yakubovich, correspondence 1879).

11...♘xc4 12 ♕a4+ ♔f7 13 ♕xc4+ ♗e6 14 d5!



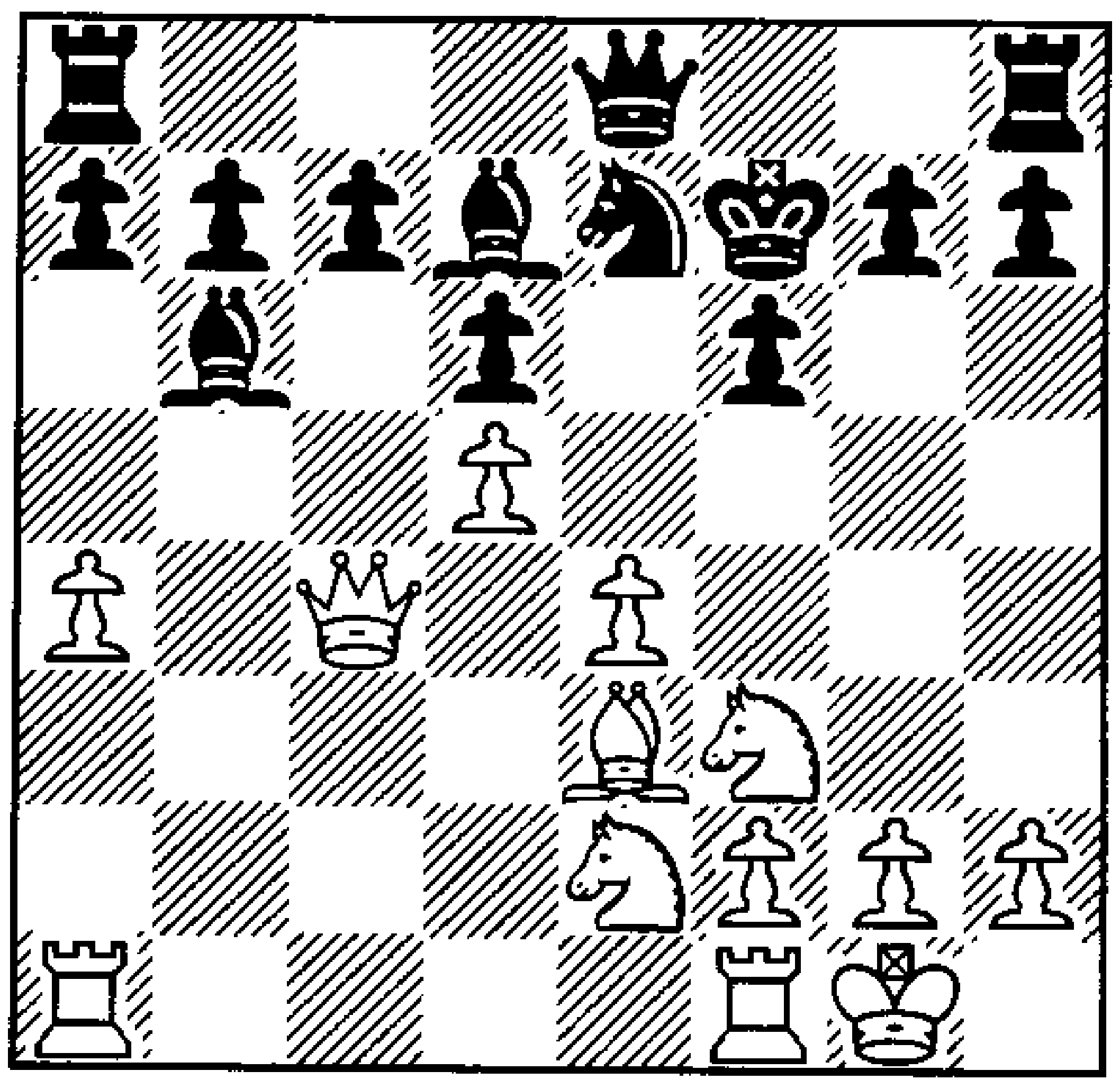
14...♗d7

'After 14...♗g4 Black has to reckon with a piece sacrifice for the sake of an attack: 15 e5! (*? – G.K.*) 15...fxe5 16 ♘xe5+ dxe5 17 ♗xe5.' (Vasyukov, Nikitin) Excuse me: after the simple 17...♘f6! and the approximate 18 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 19 ♕xg4 ♕xc3 White has got nowhere. Whereas the 'positional offensive' 15 ♘d4! and a2-a4 gives him excellent compensation for the pawn.

15 ♘e2 ♕e8?!

A loss of time. 'It was better to develop the kingside by 15...♘e7 and ...♖e8 or ...♖f8. The queen should have been reserved for a better post.' (Steinitz) After this there would evidently have followed 16 a4 with a complicated game.

16 a4! ♘e7 17 ♗e3!



17...♘g6

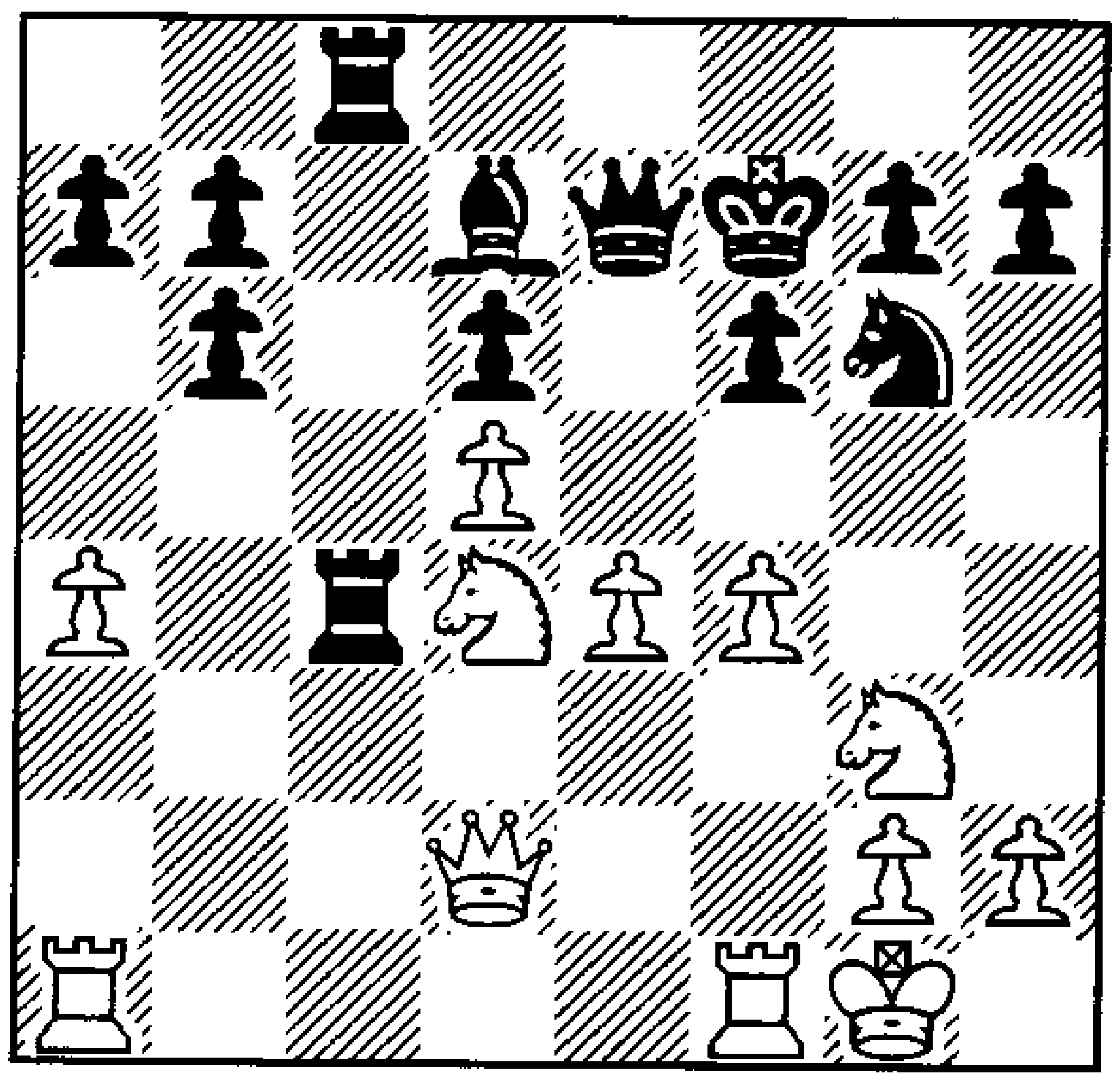
Steinitz suggested the tenacious but passive 17...♕d8 18 ♗xb6 axb6, while to me 17...♖c8!? seems interesting.

18 ♗xb6 cxb6 19 ♕b4 ♕e7

19...♗g4 20 ♖ac1 ♗xf3 (20...♕e7 21 ♘g3) does not work on account of 21 ♖c7+ ♔g8 22 gxf3 ♘h4 23 ♘g3 ♘xf3+ 24 ♔g2 ♘h4+ 25 ♔h1 with an attack.

20 ♘g3 ♖hc8 21 ♘d4 ♖c5 22 f4 ♖ac8 23 ♕d2 ♖c4

After Steinitz's move 23...♘f8, forestalling the invasion of the white knight at e6, 24 ♖ae1 is unpleasant with the dangerous threat of ♘gf5 and possibly e4-e5 (Vasyukov, Nikitin). My alternative is 23...♔g8!? 24 ♘gf5 (24 ♘e6 ♖c2) 24...♗xf5 25 exf5 ♘f8.



24 ♘e6! ♘h4

Clearly, Black cannot take twice on e6 on account of the fork f4-f5. 'But perhaps it was worth trying to disrupt the attack by giving up the exchange: 24...♖c2 25 ♕xc2! ♖xc2 26 ♘f5 ♗xe6 27 ♘xe7 ♘xe7 28 dxe6+ ♔xe6.' (Vasyukov, Nikitin) And indeed, the position after 29 ♖fc1 ♖c5 does not look altogether clear.

25 ♕d1! ♗xe6?

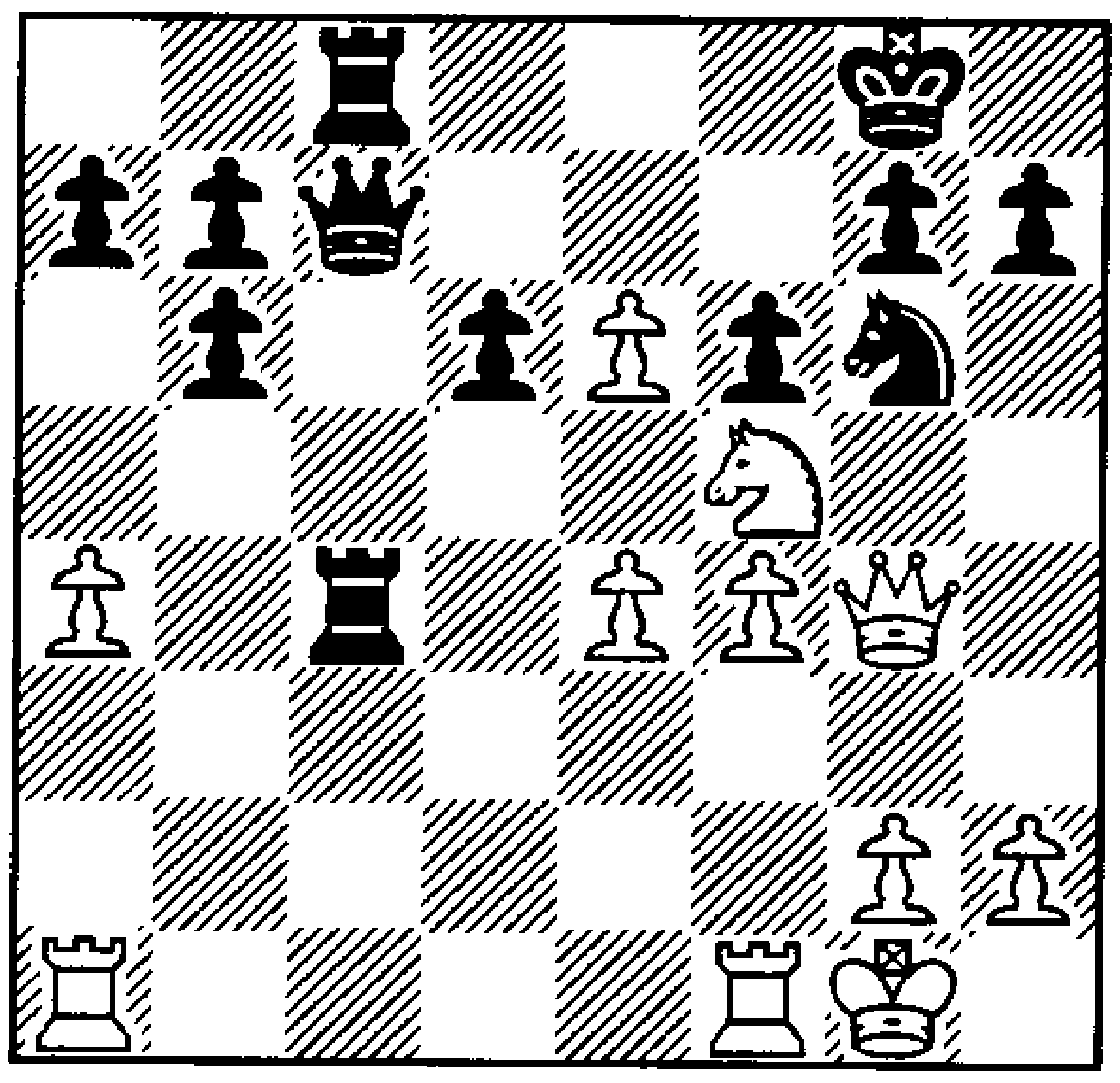
In my opinion, a serious mistake, and one that was not mentioned by the commentators. 25...♔g8! should have been played, and if 26 ♕g4 – 26...f5 27 exf5 (27 ♘xf5 ♘xf5 28 exf5 ♕f6) 27...♖c2.

26 dxe6+ ♔g8 27 ♕g4!

'The king's side attack is congenial to Mr Chigorin's style and he pursues it here with consummate mastery.' (Steinitz) However, also good was 27 f5!? g5 28 ♖f2 (28 fxg6!?) with the threat of 29 ♖d2 followed by e4-e5 (Vasyukov, Nikitin).

27...♘g6 28 ♘f5! ♕c7

Of course, not 28...♕xe6?? 29 ♘h6+!



29 e7!?

The culmination of the battle. 'Everything serves the purpose of the attack on the king. The knight at g6 is pinned and the terrible h2-h4-h5 is threatened. However, many masters of the later "cautious" times would have been unlikely to detach from its neighbours this far-advanced pawn, which guarantees victory.' (Spielmann)

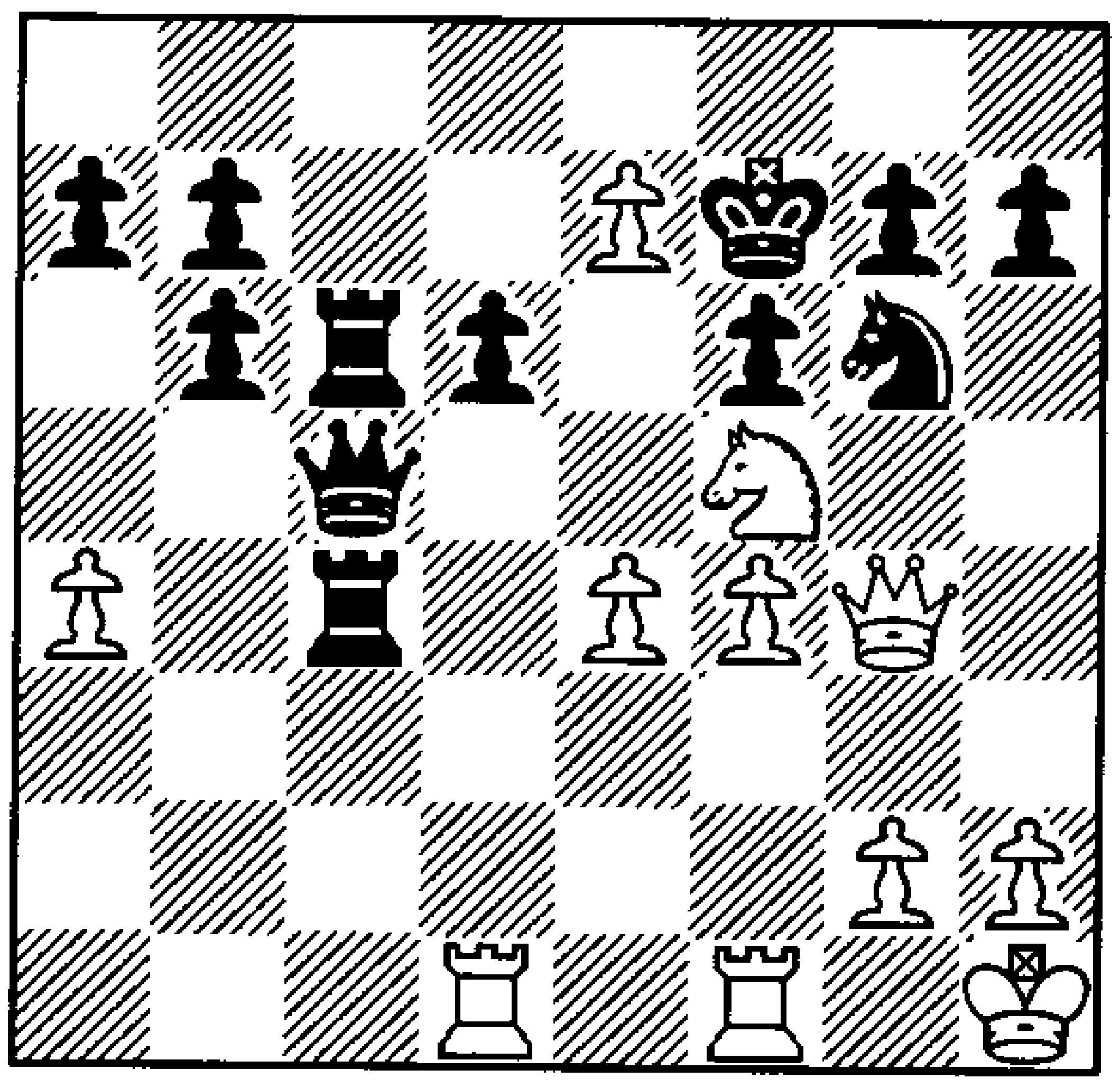
'After the direct 29 h4?! Black has the defence 29...♖xe4 30 h5 ♘e5! 31 ♕g3 ♘c4 and ...♕c5+, but after 29 ♖ae1! followed by the march of the h-pawn Black would appear to have no defence.' (Vasyukov, Nikitin).

29...♔f7?

The decisive mistake. Far more tenacious was Steinitz's suggestion of 29...♖e8! (but not 29...♖xe4? 30 ♘xd6). In the variation of Vasyukov and Nikitin 30 h4 ♖xe7 31 h5 ♘f8 32 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 33 ♖ac1!? ♕xe4 34 ♖ce1! ♕d4+ 35 ♔h1 the outcome remains unclear. Therefore I suggest 32 h6! g6 33 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 34 ♖ae1 ♖xe4 35 ♕d1 and White's position is better.

30 ♖ad1 ♕c5+ 31 ♔h1 ♖c6

This results in a fatal weakening of the eighth rank.



32 e5!!

A breakthrough at the most fortified point! True, in the opinion of the computer, White also wins by the cold 32 e8♕+!? ♔xe8 33 ♘xg7+ ♔f7 34 ♕d7+ ♘e7 35 ♘e6 ♕h5 36 ♘d8+.

32...fxe5 (also pretty was 32...dxe5 33 ♖d8 ♖e6 34 ♖f8+! or 32...♕xe5 33 ♘xd6+! ♖xd6 34 fxe5)

33 ♘xd6+

The commentators attach an exclamation mark to this 'crushing blow', although 33 e8♕+!? ♔xe8 34 ♘xg7+ ♔f7 35 ♕d7+ would have concluded matters immediately.

33...♖xd6 34 fxe5+ ♖f6 35 e8♕+! ♔xe8 36 ♕d7+ ♔f8 37 exf6 1-0

'The grandiosity of Chigorin's ideas is enchanting: his every move breathes with creative force and an irresistible will to win.' (Spielmann)

In this type of complicated, dynamic play Mikhail Ivanovich was superior to his contemporaries. He had a very subtle feeling for the initiative and he was not afraid to sacrifice material. Anderssen too played successfully in positions where he was material down, but in his time the standard of defence was still very weak. Chigorin overcame far more serious resistance! In many respects his style was the forerunner of Alekhine's style, and in the mid-20th century the young Spassky – a great connoisseur of Chigorin's games – played in a similar manner...

Here is another classic game by Chigorin, from the 'final candidates match' with Gunsberg (Havana 1890). Although this fierce clash ended in a draw (+9 -9 =5), the Russian master's play created by far the stronger impression.

Game 21

I.Gunsberg-M.Chigorin

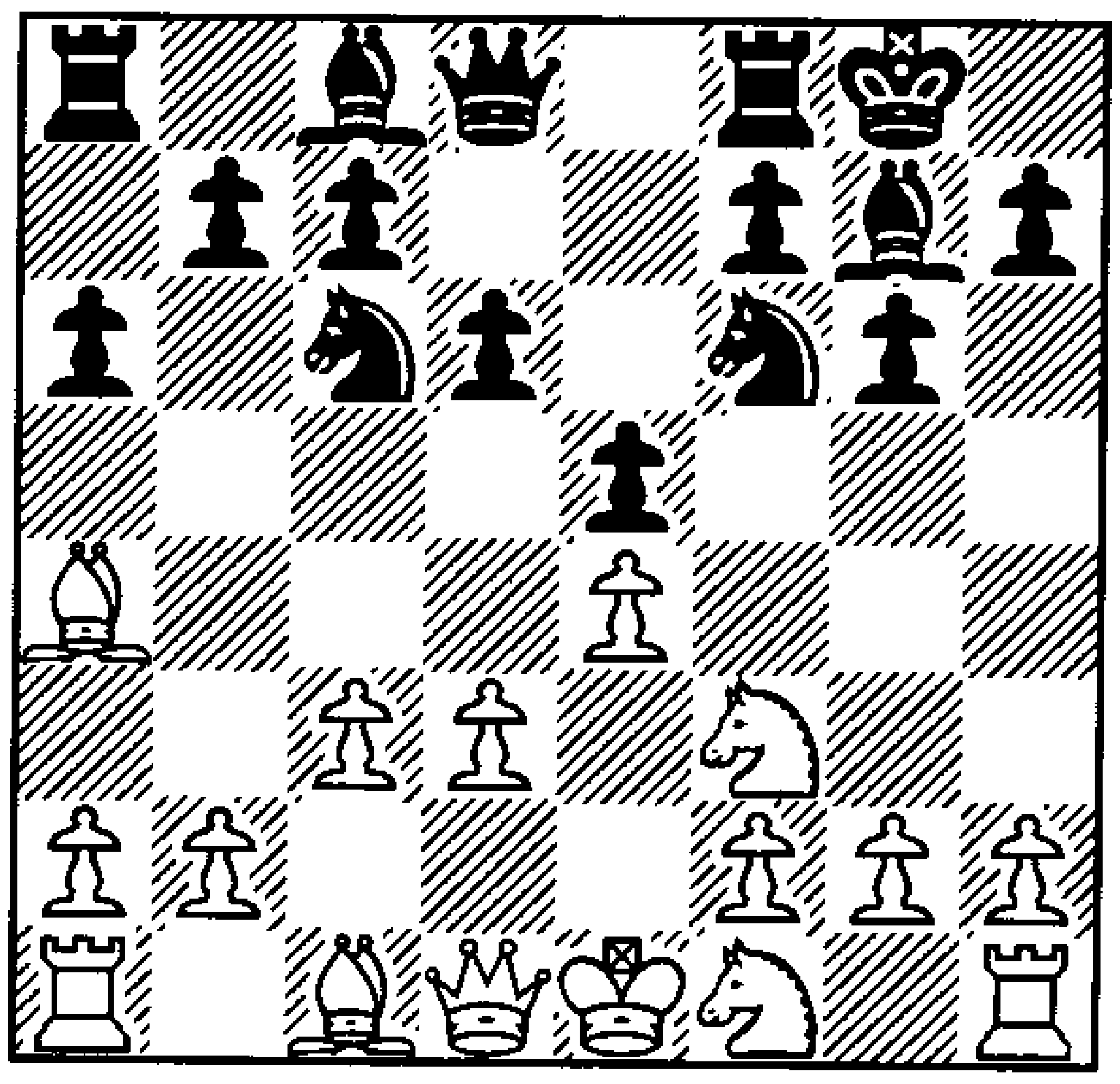
Match, Havana 1890, 2nd game

Ruy Lopez C77

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6

In his second match with Steinitz (Havana 1892) Chigorin preferred 3...♘f6 4 d3 d6 5 c3 g6 6 ♘bd2 ♗g7 7 ♘f1 0-0 8 ♘e3 d5! or 8 ♗a4 d5!?, but not 8...♘d7?! (*Game No. 25*).

4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 d3 d6 6 c3 g6 7 ♘bd2 ♗g7 8 ♘f1 0-0



9 h3?!

Inappropriate flank activity, which is parried by a counter in the centre.

9...d5!

The position is even more favourable for Black than in the aforementioned games with Steinitz, where there was not the possibility of immediately driving back the bishop by ...b7-b5.

10 ♕e2

After 10 ♗xc6?! bxc6 11 ♘xe5 the simplest is 11...♘xe4, although 11...♕e8 will also do.

10...b5 11 ♗c2?!

'After this the bishop remains shut out of play until the end of the game. It made sense to play 11 ♗b3 and only if ...♘a5 – ♗c2. Then it would have been more difficult for Black to occupy the d4-square.' (Vasyukov, Nikitin)

11...d4! (seizing space) **12 g4 ♕d6 13 ♘1d2**

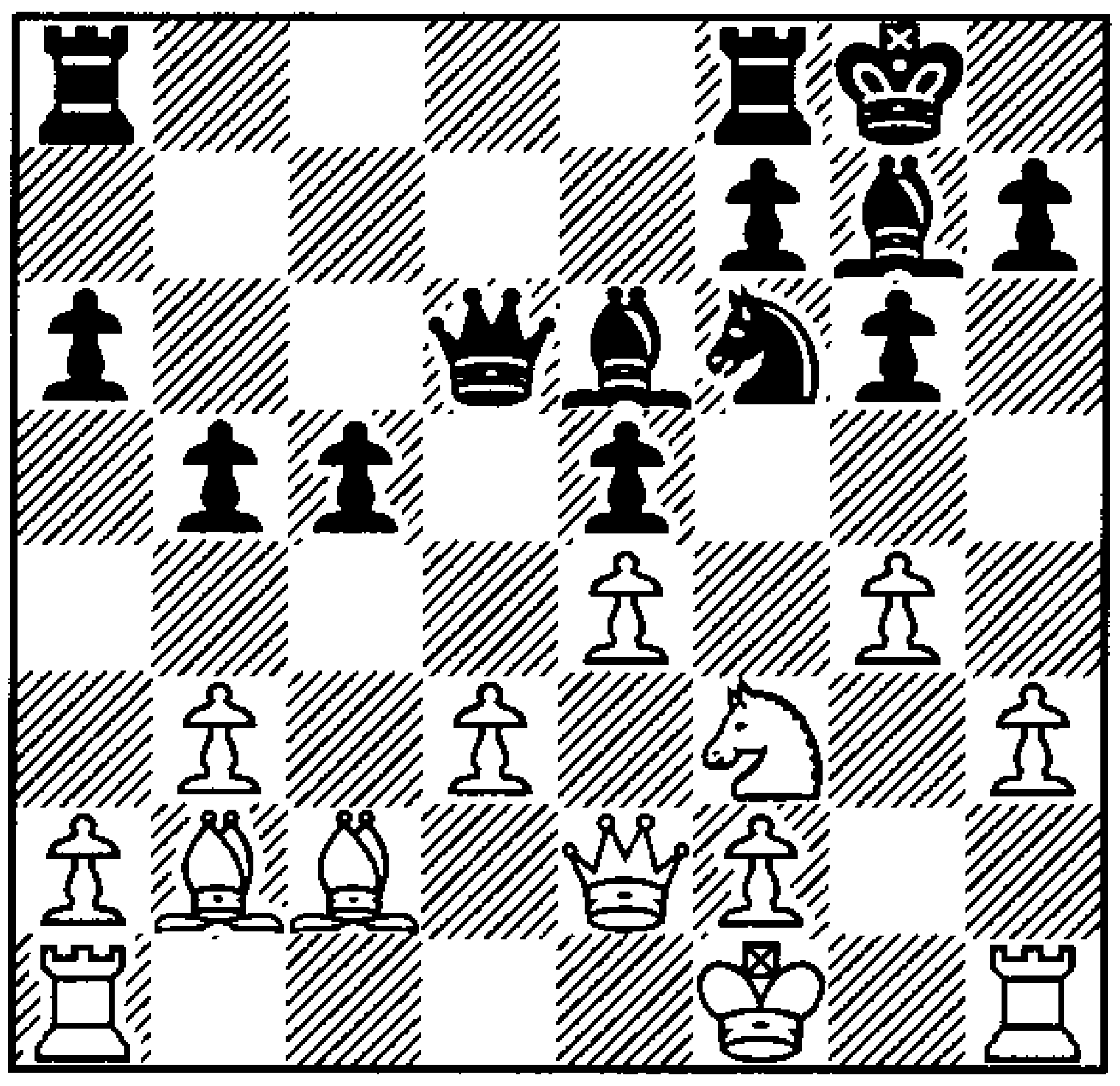
If 13 ♘g3, then 13...♕c5 is possible, also forcing the capture on d4.

13...♗e6 14 cxd4

'If 14 0-0 the immediate 14...h5 is possible or first 14...♖ad8; in any case White's position is cramped.' (Chigorin)

14...♘xd4 15 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 16 ♘f3 ♕b4+ 17 ♔f1 ♕d6 18 b3 (the advantage is now on the side of Black, for example: 18 d4?! ♗c4 19 ♗d3 ♗xd3 20 ♕xd3 ♘d7 21 d5 c6! etc.).

18...c5 19 ♗b2



19...♘d7!

The start of a deep manoeuvre, which has now become standard – the knight is aiming for d4. At the same time 20...f5! is threatened.

20 ♘g5 ♘b8! 21 ♘xe6 fxe6!

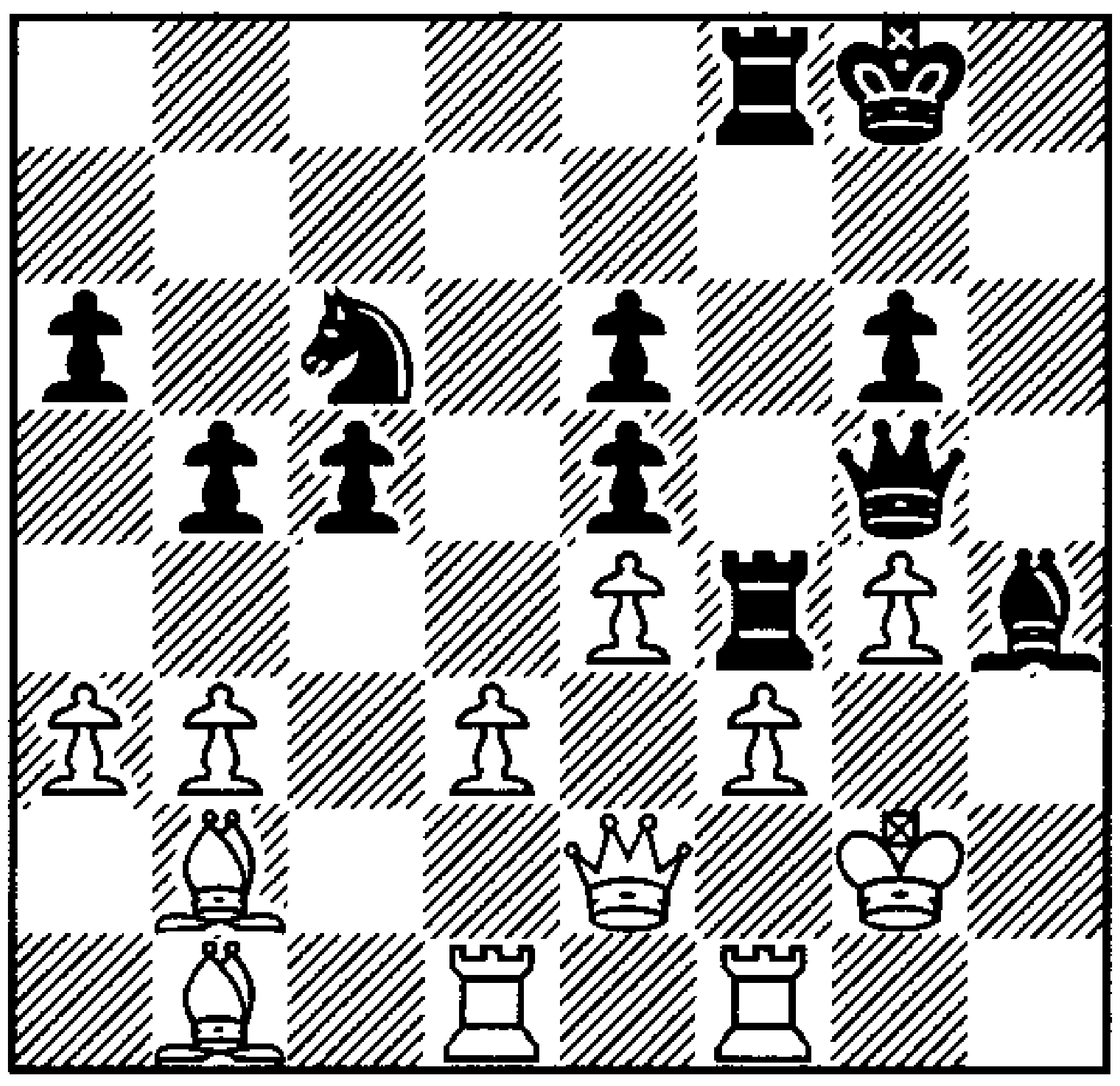
Opening the f-file for an attack is also a textbook procedure in such positions. Black's advantage is growing.

22 ♔g2 ♖a7 23 ♖hf1 ♖af7 24 f3 ♘c6 25 ♕d2 ♖f4 26 ♖ad1 ♕e7 27 ♕e1 ♗f6 28 ♕e2

'If 28 ♗c1 ♗h4 29 ♕c3 (29 ♕e2 ♘d4), then 29...♖xf3! 30 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 31 ♔xf3 ♕f6+ 32 ♔g2 ♕f2+ 33 ♔h1 ♕f3+ and mate in three moves.' (Chigorin)

28...♗h4 29 ♗b1 h5! 30 a3 hxg4 31 hxg4 ♕g5!

With the deadly threat of 32...♖xf3! 33 ♖xf3 ♕xg4+.



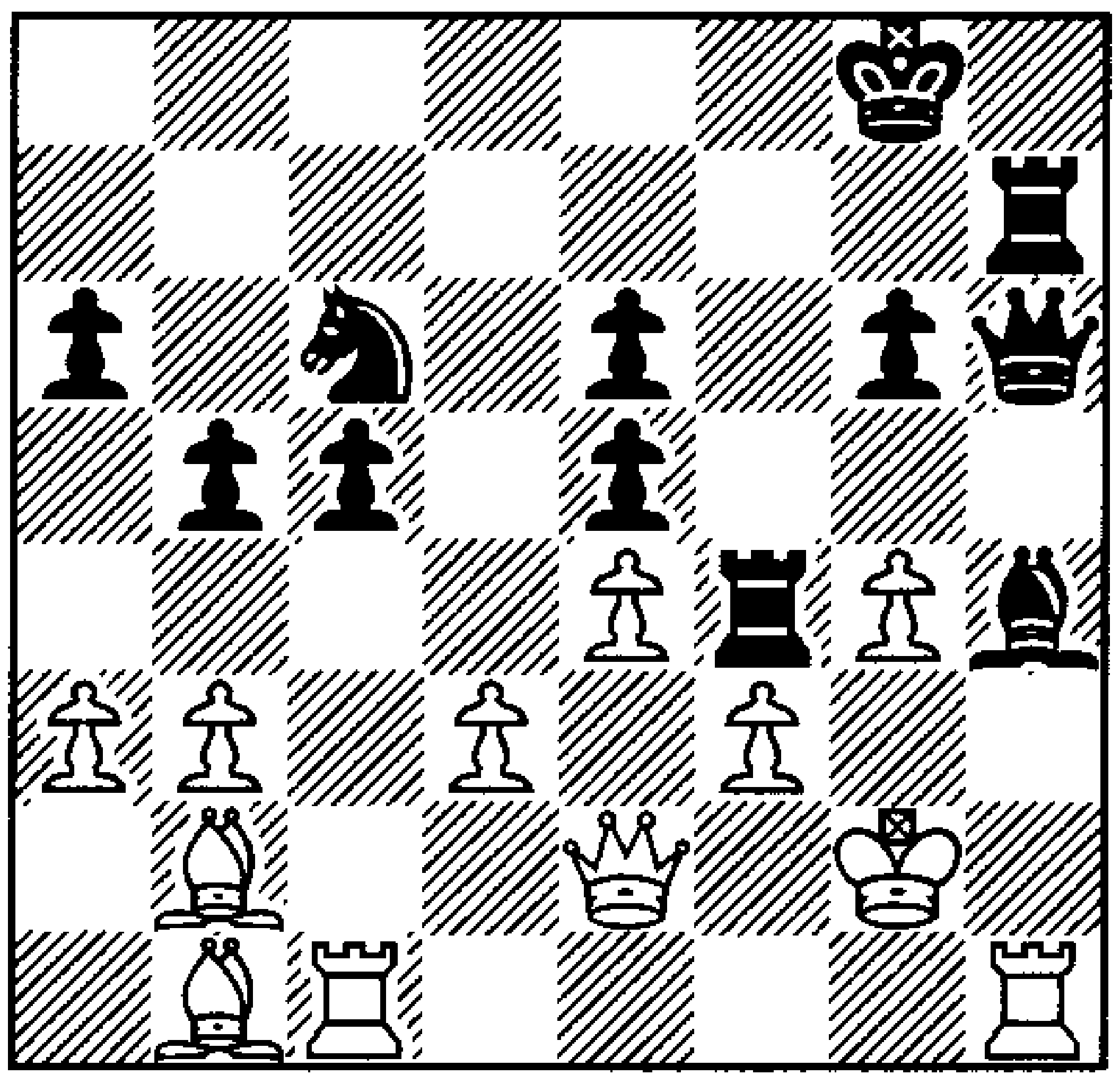
32 ♔h3

Also bad is 32 ♗c1 ♘d4! 33 ♗xf4 ♖xf4 34 ♕b2 ♘xf3 35 ♔h1 ♕xg4 36 ♕g2 ♕h5 when White can resign.

32...♖8f7! 33 ♖c1

Or 33 ♗c1 ♖h7! 34 ♗xf4 ♗g3+! 35 ♔g2 ♖h2+ 36 ♔g1 ♕xf4 and wins. The weakness of the dark squares and the bad placing of his pieces renders White's position hopeless.

33...♕h6 34 ♔g2 ♖h7 (threatening ...♗e1!) **35 ♖h1**



35...♖xf3!!

'A charming mastercoup of the rarest profundity and brilliancy.' (Steinitz) 'It could have been created only by a great master.' (Gunsberg) It is indeed very spectacular!

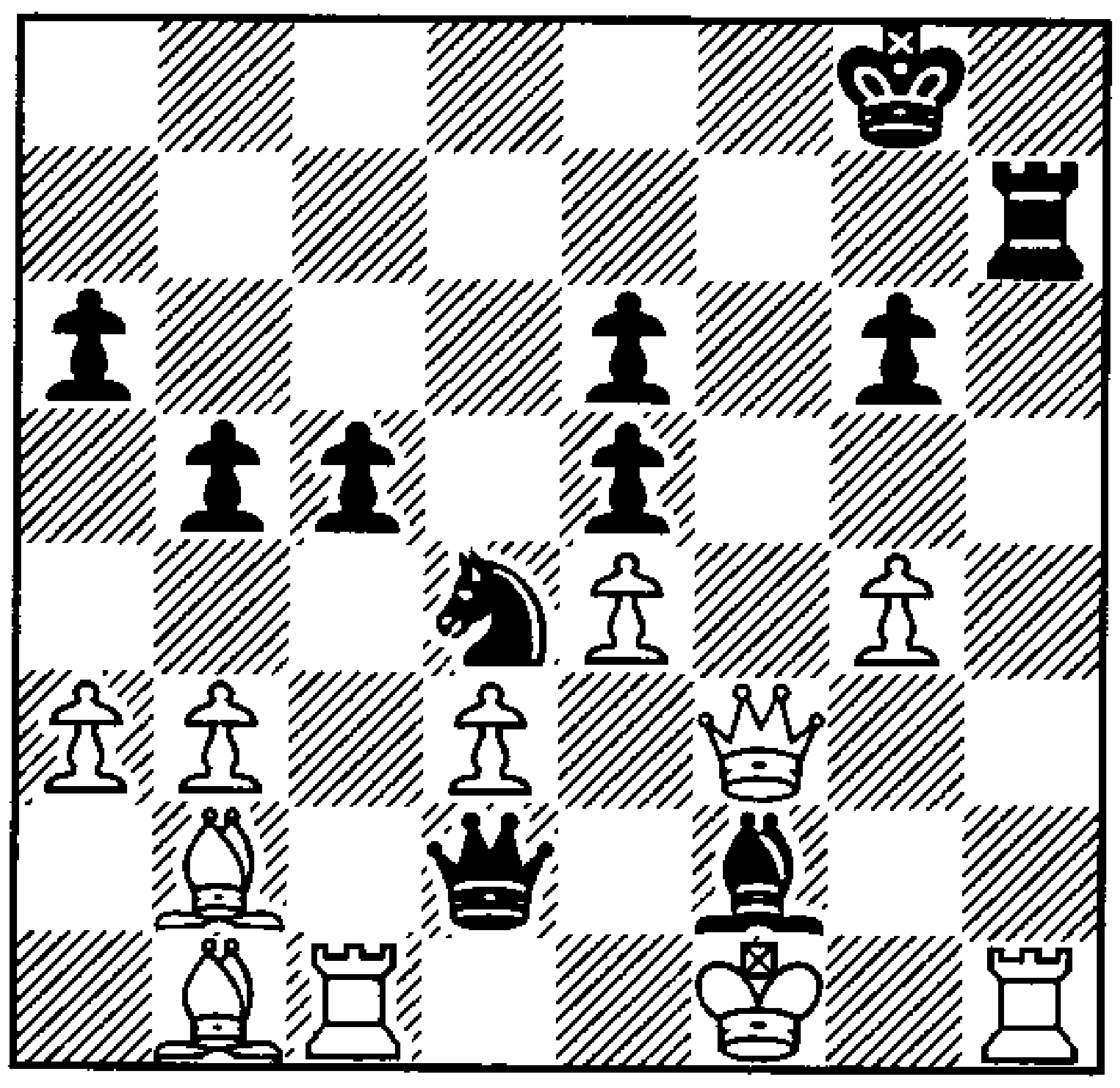
36 ♕xf3

'If 36 ♖xh4, then 36...♖g3+! 37 ♔xg3 ♕xh4+ 38 ♔f3 ♕h3+ 39 ♔f2 ♖f7+ 40 ♔e1! ♕g3+ 41 ♔d1 ♖f2 winning the queen.' (Chigorin) However, also good enough is the simple 36...♕xh4 37 ♔xf3 ♕h3+ 38 ♔f2 ♕h2+ 39 ♔e1 ♕g3+ 40 ♔d1 ♖h1+ 41 ♔d2 ♖h2.

36...♕d2+ 37 ♔g1 ♗f2+

They all attach an exclamation mark to this move, although 37...♘d4!? 38 ♗xd4 ♗f2+ was also good.

38 ♔f1 (38 ♕xf2 ♖xh1+ 39 ♔g2 ♖h2+) **38...♘d4!**



The final stroke – on the theme of overloading.

39 ♗xd4 ♕xc1+ 40 ♔e2 ♖xh1 41 ♗xf2 ♕xb1 42 g5 ♕f1+ 0-1

A splendid, complete game – 'the pearl of the match', as it was described by the commentators.

Chigorin won a number of other momentous games (sixth, 20th) against Gunsberg, which also became a step forward in the development of chess. But, strangely enough, their match ended in a draw. What told was an unusual phenomenon of Chigorin: he could play on the whole more interestingly, more vividly and more strongly than his opponent, but his unsure handling of certain types of positions and crude oversights would reduce his creative superiority to nought.

Such was the world champion's main opponent in the late 1880s to the early 1890s. 'He stands as though apart from the ranks of 19th century masters, he is a special figure,' thought Alekhine. 'Chigorin's talent is enormous, and possibly he is a real genius. At times the depth of his ideas can be inaccessible to mere mortals.'

Under the Havana Sun

The first Steinitz-Chigorin match (Havana 1889) was played to the best of 20 games and was extremely uncompromising: there was only one draw, and that a bloody one, in the final game. Chigorin won at the start and was leading after seven games, then suffered three successive defeats, won back one point, but... again lost three in a row and it was all over: Steinitz won the match 10½-6½.

This was what the world champion wrote immediately afterwards:

'This was a match between an old master of the young school and a young master of the old school, and the young school won, despite the age of its master. The young master of the old school sacrificed pawns and pieces. The old master of the young school went further – he sacrificed entire games, to demonstrate what he understood by sound positional principles. And I think it has to be admitted that I paid quite a high price for my experiments, by carrying them out in a fierce match struggle under the pressure of restricted time, and also without any preliminary testing in practice. Therefore my adventures in defence against the Evans Gambit cost me, at the least, five out of the seven lost games; but I am satisfied by the fact that I nevertheless managed to win four games and draw one (*here the post-match consultation games have also been included – G. K.*), which is not such an insignificant success, if account is taken of the novelty and difficulty of the experiment.'

Using examples from the match, I should like to confirm the validity of Steinitz's words and his amazing obstinacy when playing Black.

Game 22

M.Chigorin-W.Steinitz

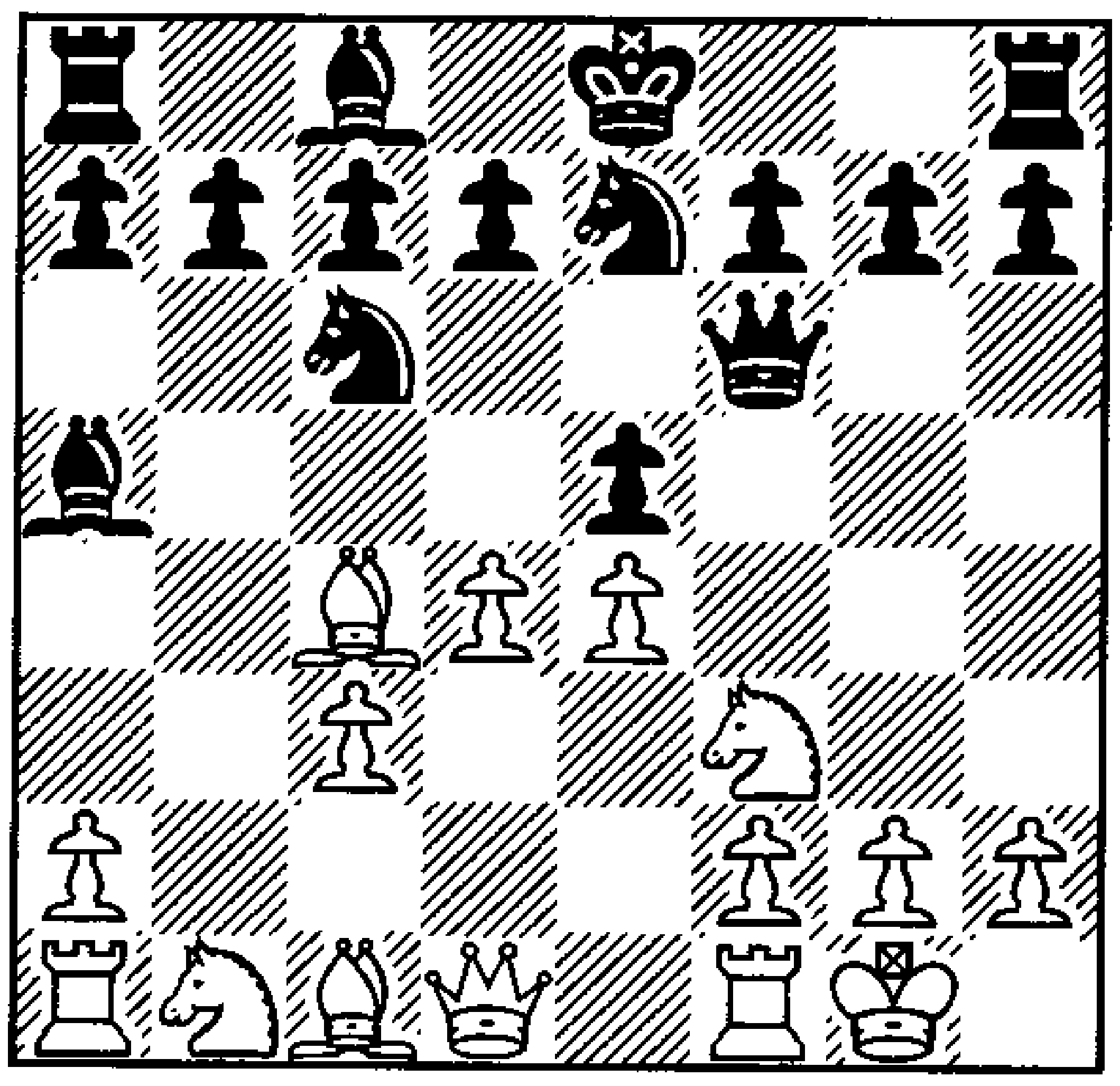
World Championship,
Havana 1889, 17th game
Evans Gambit C52

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 b4 ♗xb4 5 c3 ♗a5

It is good at least that he didn't play 5...♗f8?! 6 d4 ♕e7?! 7 0-0 d6 8 ♕b3 g6 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 ♖d1 ♗h6 11 ♘bd2! ♕f6 12 ♗a3 ♘ge7 13 ♗d5! with an agonising death on the 41st move (Chigorin-Steinitz, Vienna 1882).

6 0-0 (before Lasker it was not known that 6 d4! is more accurate) **6...♕f6?!** (6...d6 7 d4 ♗b6! – *Game No.43*) **7 d4 ♘ge7**

An artificial defence, which before this Steinitz called 'in principle correct and sound', and even 'the best', but for some reason, with the exception of one instance, he did not employ it on any subsequent occasions...



8 d5!

In the first game Steinitz lost after 8 ♘g5?!, but not on account of the opening. The aforementioned 'instance' was 8 ♕a4?! ♗b6 9 ♗g5 ♕d6 10 ♘a3 exd4 11 ♘b5 ♕g6 12 cxd4 a6 13 d5 ♘e5 14 ♘xe5 ♕xg5 15 ♘f3 ♕h6 16 ♗b3 0-0 17 ♖ac1 c6 18 ♘bd4 c5 19 ♘e2 d6, and Black gradually won (Gunsberg-Steinitz, 18th matchgame 1890/91).

8...♘d8 9 ♕a4!

Less accurate is 9 ♗g5 ♕d6 10 ♕a4, but the world champion was able to demonstrate this only after two defeats:

1) 10...♗b6?! 11 ♘a3 ♕g6 12 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 13 ♘xe5 ♕f6 14 ♘f3 ♕xc3 15 e5 c6 16 d6+ ♔f8 17 ♗b3! h6 18 ♕h4 g5 19 ♕h5 ♕d3 20 ♖ad1! (seventh game);

2) 10...b6?! 11 ♘a3 a6 12 ♗d3! ♗xc3 13 ♖ab1! ♗b7 (13...♕g6 14 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 15 ♕c4) 14 ♘c4 ♕c5 (14...♕g6 15 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 16 ♕a3+) 15 ♗e3 etc. (11th game);

3) 10...f6! (the correct way) 11 ♗c1 ♗b6 12 ♘a3 c6 13 ♗b3 (13 ♖d1!?) 13...♗c5 with an unclear game: if 14 ♖d1 Black has 14...b5 15 ♕a5 ♘b7 16 ♕a6 ♘d8 with equal chances (13th game). However, Black avoided the repetition of moves and... once again lost!

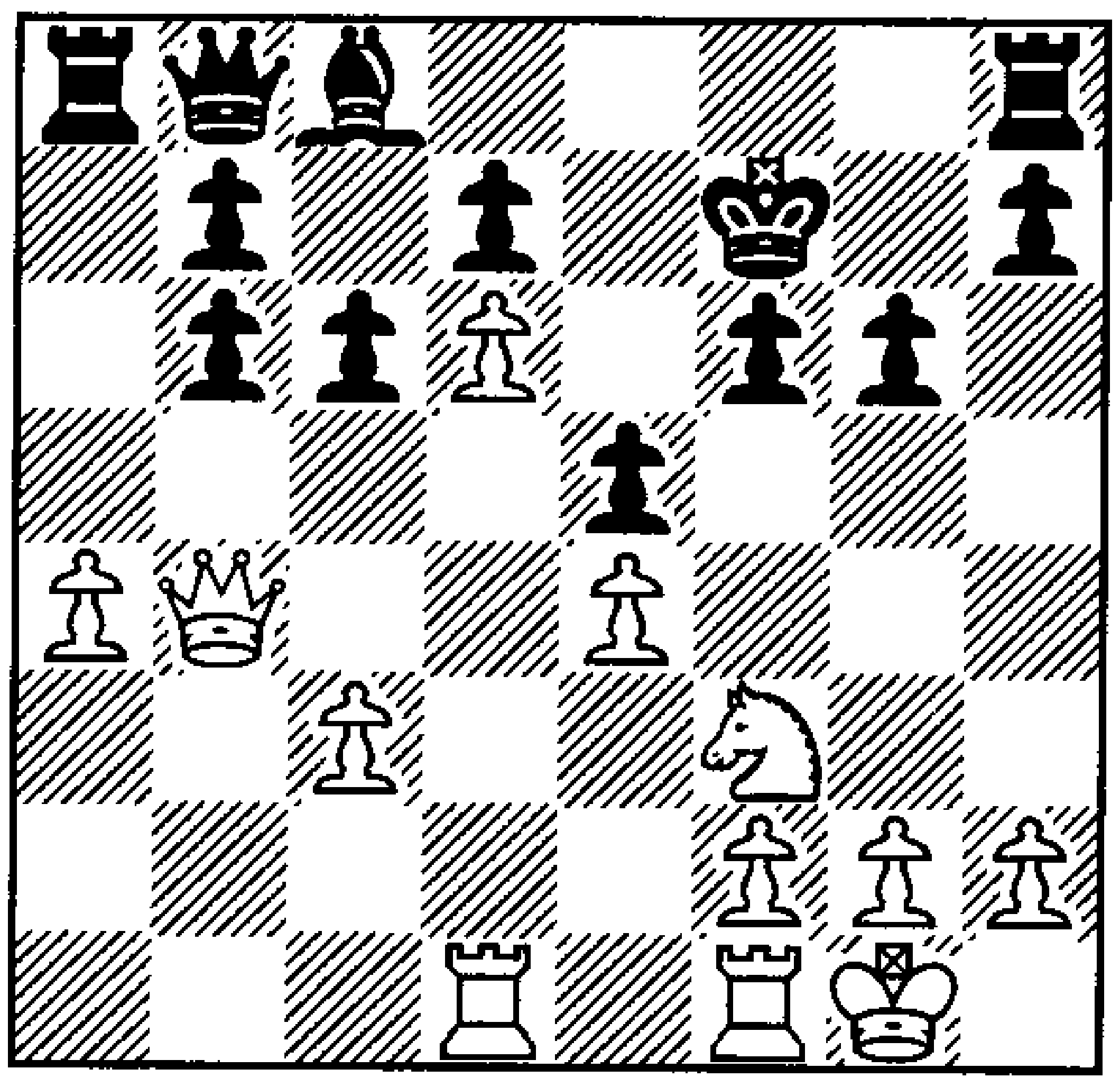
9...♗b6 10 ♗g5 ♕d6 11 ♘a3 c6 (11...f6?! 12 ♘b5) **12 ♖ad1 ♕b8**

If 12...f6 13 dxc6 ♕xc6 14 ♘b5!

13 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 14 d6+ ♔f8 15 ♕b4!

In the 15th game 15 ♘xe5?! was played, after which 15...♗c5 was possible. But now White has excellent compensation for the pawn and, what's more, Chigorin is in his element!

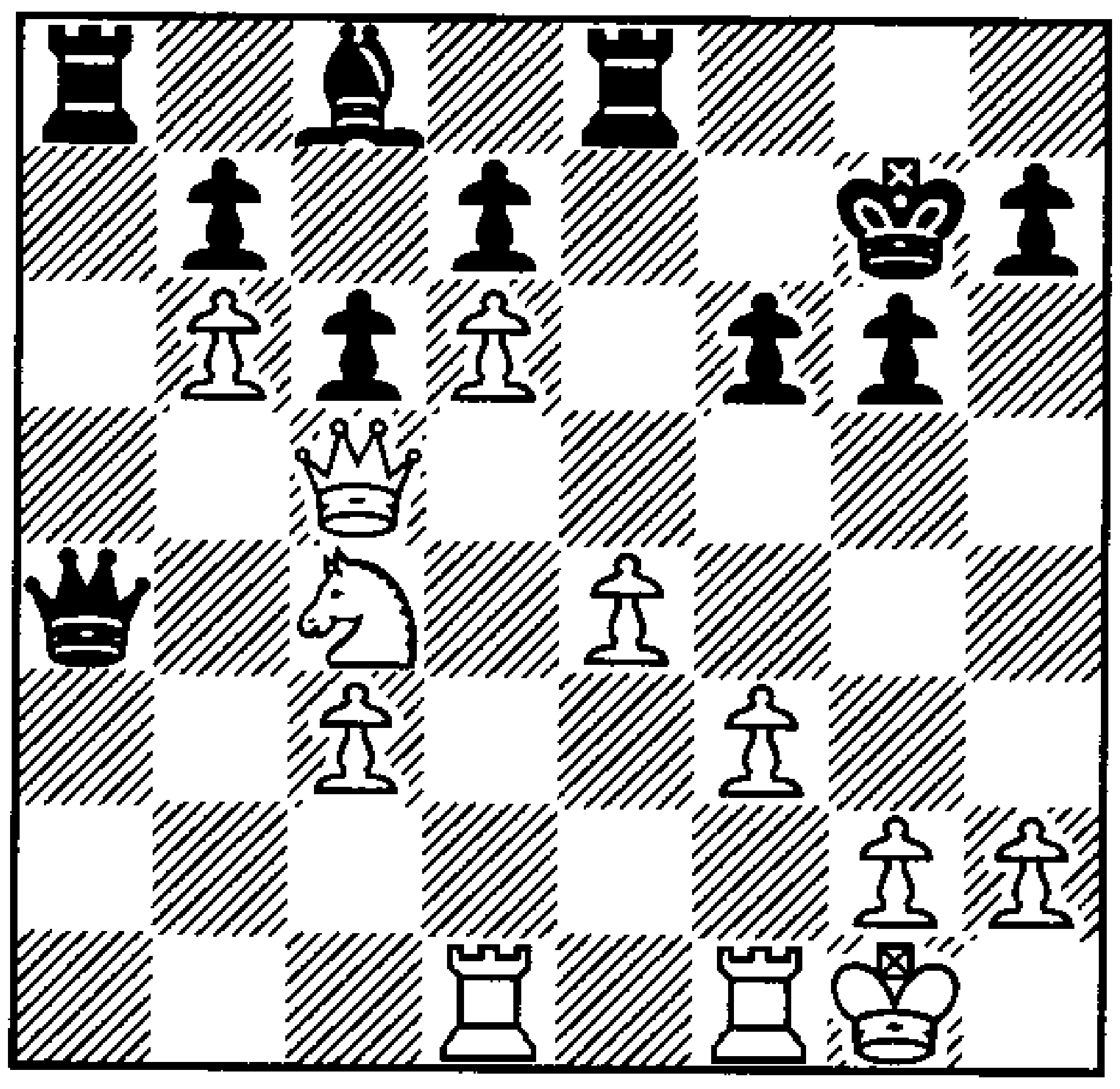
15...f6 16 ♗b3 g6 17 ♘c4 ♔g7 18 a4 ♘f7 19 ♘xb6 axb6 20 ♗xf7! ♔xf7



21 ♘xe5+! (a brilliant stroke!) **21...♔g7**

If 21...fxe5 White wins by 22 f4! with the deadly opening of the f-file.

22 ♘c4 b5 23 axb5 ♕a7 24 b6 ♕a4 25 ♕c5 ♖e8 26 f3



And with the locked-in bishop at c8 Chigorin should have easily won, then he nearly lost (what jumps there were in the standard of play!), and in the end the two players 'tired by the sun' agreed a draw on the 71st move. This was the final game.

Impartial statistics show that Steinitz's victory in the match was secured by his enormous advantage playing White (+7 -1), achieved with the help of the rigorous **1 ♘f3** (epistle to Kramnik!), in the main after **1...d5 2 d4 ♗g4 3 ♘e5 ♗h5 4 ♕d3 ♕c8 5 c4** (second game), **3 c4! ♗xf3?! 4 gxf3** (fourth and sixth games), **3...♘c6 4 e3 e5 5 ♕b3! ♗xf3 6 gxf3** (10th and 14th games) and **4...e6 5 ♘c3 ♗b4 6 ♗d2 ♘ge7 7 ♗d3 ♗f5 8 ♗xf5 ♘xf5 9 cxd5 exd5 10 ♕b3 ♗xc3 11 ♗xc3 ♖b8 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♖ac1** (12th game). The theory of the original Chigorin Defence (cf. *Game No.31*) made its first, timid steps...

Another worthy candidate for the world crown at the time was considered to be the Anglo-Hungarian master Isidor Gunsberg (1854-1930), winner of the tournaments in Hamburg 1885 and Bradford 1888. After drawing a crucial match with Chigorin (Havana 1890), he issued a challenge to Steinitz, and eleven months later they met in a match for the world championship (New York 1890/91). They played to the best of 20 games, and the champion again held his title, winning 10½-8½. The challenger did not seriously threaten the throne, but he showed himself to be a pretty solid positional player: as Tarrasch later wrote, 'Gunsberg was the first of Steinitz's opponents to fight against him with his own weapon.'

A year earlier in New York the first volume of Steinitz's famous opening guide *The Modern Chess Instructor* was published, which also included a thematic article *The modern school and its tendencies* (extracts from this manual were regularly published in Russian chess magazines). In the *Instructor* it was asserted that the best defence in the Evans Gambit after 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 b4 ♗xb4 5 c3 ♗a5 6 0-0 is 6...♕f6 7 d4 ♘h6!?, and the best retreat in the Two Knights Defence after 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♘f6 4 ♘g5 d5 5 exd5 ♘a5 6 ♗b5+ c6 7 dxc6 bxc6 8 ♗e2 h6 is 9 ♘h3!? Incidentally, three quarters of a century later Fischer agreed with this latter assertion, but such a way of playing made Chigorin indignant, and he invited Steinitz to play a mini-match of two games by telegraph with these opening variations (with a time control of three days per move and a break during the match for the world title match with Gunsberg).

Steinitz, as always, accepted the challenge, but it all ended dismally for him: firstly, there are (probably false) stories that the New York police, on learning of the suspicious telegraph encoding, arrested him as a Russian spy, and secondly, Chigorin won both games brilliantly! See what a crushing defeat he inflicted on the champion in the Evans Gambit.

Game 23

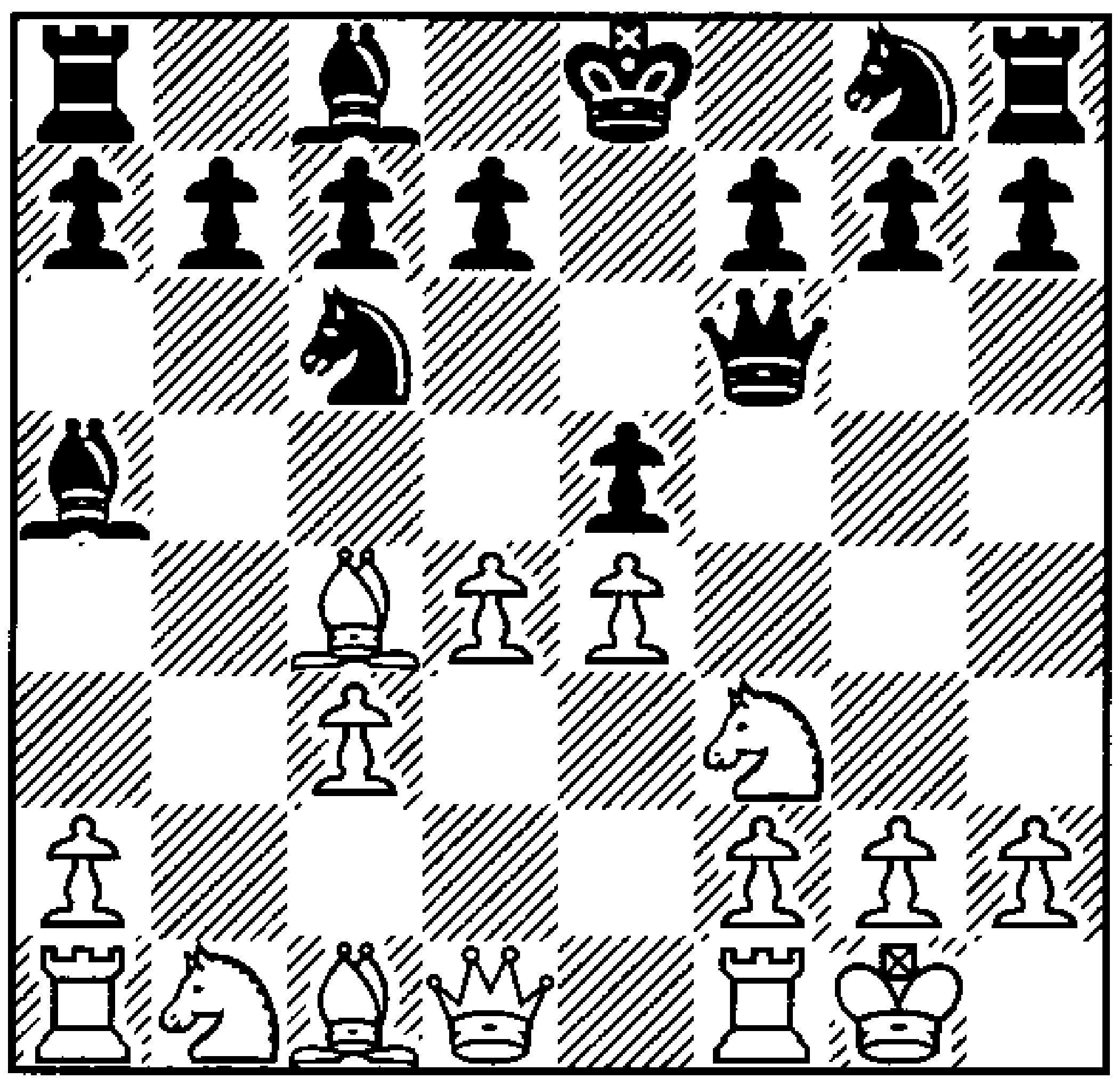
M.Chigorin-W.Steinitz

Match by telegraph 1890/91, 1st game

Evans Gambit C52

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 b4

♗xb4 5 c3 ♗a5 6 0-0 ♕f6?! (6...d6!) **7 d4**



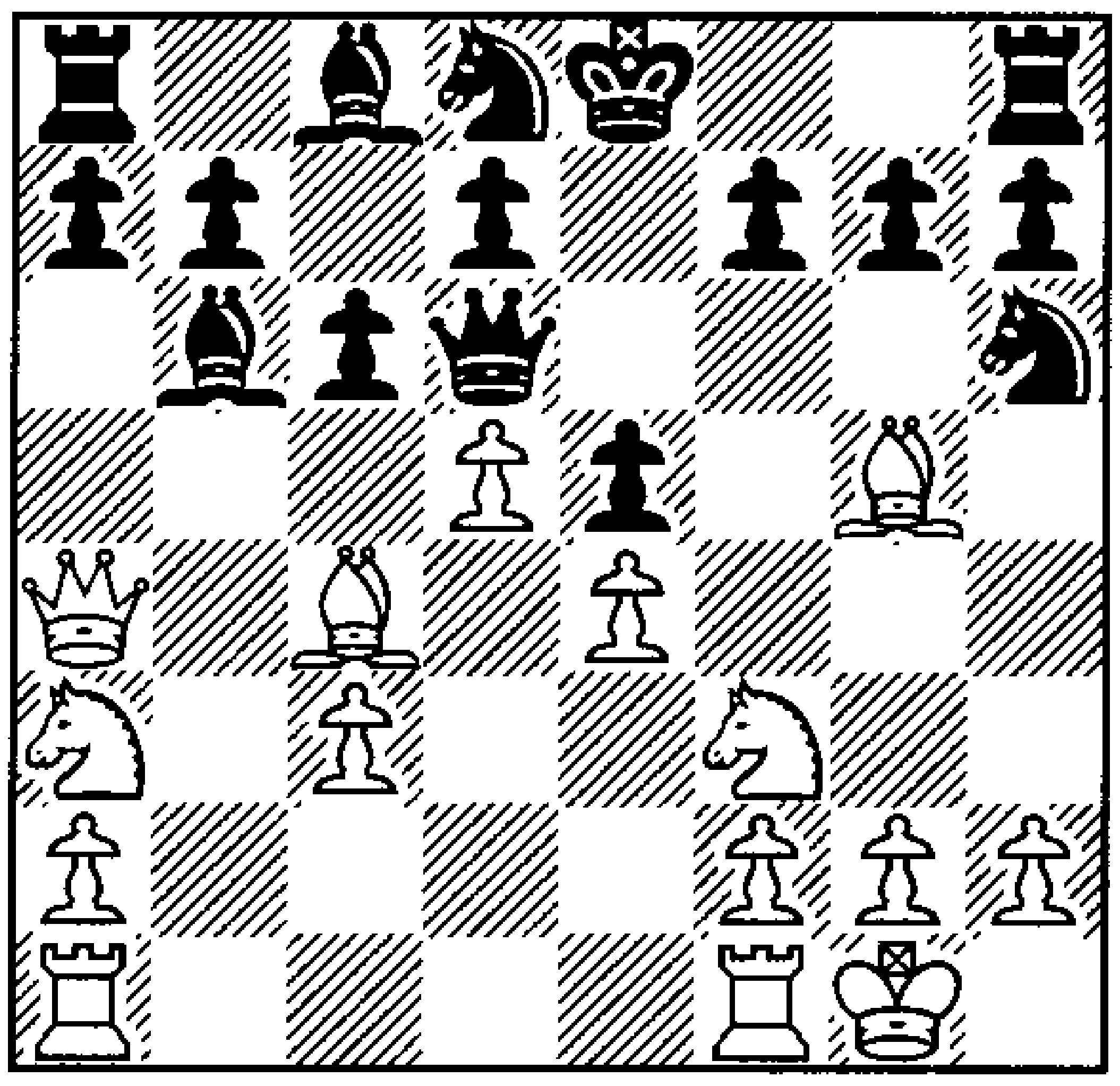
7...♘h6

In the 1889 match Steinitz tried to uphold 7...♘ge7 (*Game No.22*), and against Gunsberg – 7...h6, but he did not repeat such experiments any more.

8 ♗g5 ♕d6

After 8...♕g6 9 d5 ♘b8 10 ♗xh6 ♕xh6 11 ♘xe5 0-0 12 d6 ♘c6 Vasyukov and Nikitin recommend 13 ♘g4! ♕g6 14 ♖e1 with the initiative.

9 d5 ♘d8 10 ♕a4 ♗b6 11 ♘a3 c6 (11...0-0 12 ♗d3! ♕g6 13 ♘c4 etc.)



12 ♗e2!

A subtle manoeuvre: the bishop makes way for the knight.

12...♗c7

Or 12...♗c5 13 ♘c4 ♕f8 14 ♗xd8 ♔xd8 (14...b5 15 ♕a5 bxc4 16 dxc6) 15 ♘fxe5 f6 16 dxc6! etc.

13 ♘c4 ♕f8

Typical Steinitz! However, also bad were both 13...♕c5 14 d6! ♗b8 (14...♗xd6 15 ♗e3) 15 ♗e3 ♕b5 16 ♕c2 with the threat of ♘b6, and 13...♕g6 14 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 15 ♘fxe5 ♕f6 16 ♕a3 ♗e7 17 d6.

14 d6! (and this is typically Chigorin-like)

14...♗xd6

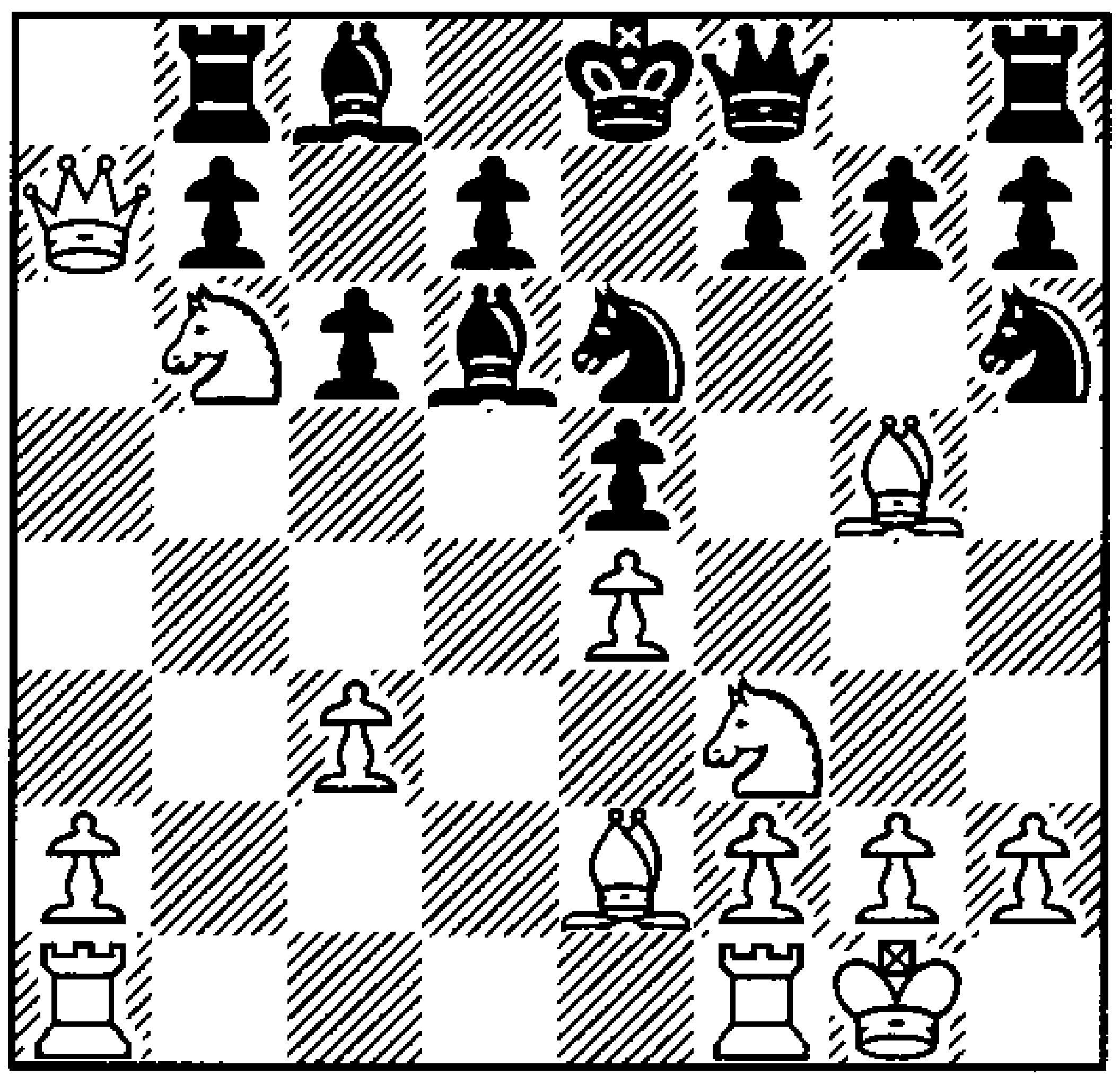
After 14...♗b8 15 ♗e7! or 14...b5 15 dxc7 ♘b7 16 ♕b3 Black loses quickly (16...♘c5 17 ♕b4 bxc4 18 ♕b8!).

15 ♘b6 ♖b8 16 ♕xa7 ♘e6

It is typical that the champion also dared to go in for this variation in his match for the chess crown with Gunsberg (New York 1890/91). When in the 12th game the latter employed the Evans Gambit for the first time, before playing 6...♕f6?! Steinitz unexpectedly asked: 'Do you think that I am morally bound to play exactly the same defence as I did against Chigorin?' Gunsberg replied: 'You are not exactly bound, but the public will expect you to defend your own theories!'

Alas, after 16...♘g4 17 ♘h4! ♘e6 18 ♗xg4 ♘xg5 19 ♘f5 ♘e6 20 ♖fd1! ♗c7 21 ♘a8! ♖xa8 22 ♕xa8 ♔d8 23 ♖xd7+! ♔xd7 24 ♖d1+ Black lost ignominiously...

16...♘e6 looks rather more solid, but... not for a game with a time control of 'three days for a move'.



17 ♗c1!

'Astounding. This move, like White's 12th and 14th moves, bears the stamp of genius.'

(Steinitz)

17...♘g8 18 ♗a3 (with the threat of ♕xb8) **18...c5 19 ♖ad1! ♘f6**

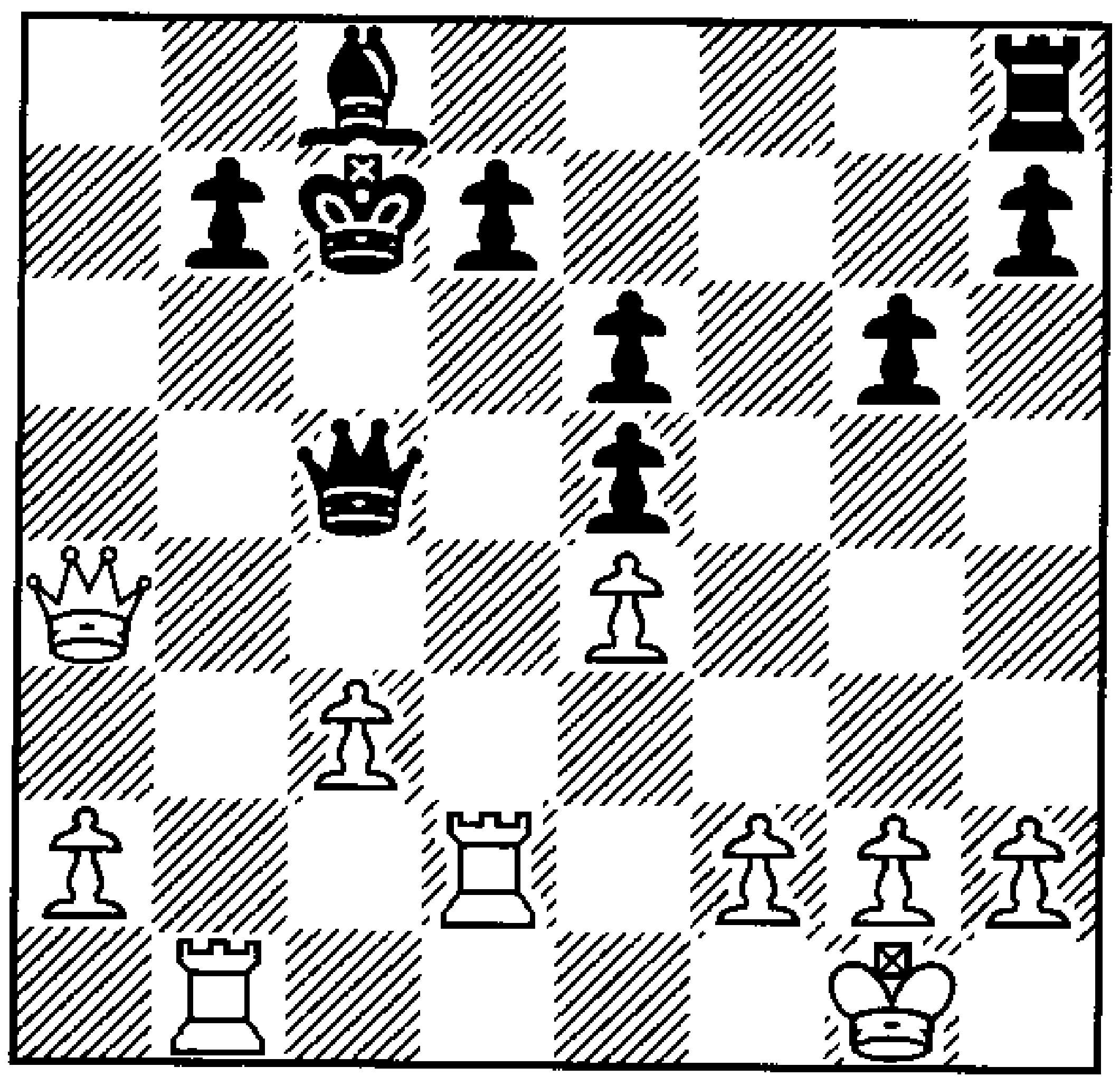
If 19...♗c7 Chigorin had prepared 20 ♗b5 ♘f6 21 ♘d5 ♗d6 22 ♘h4! ♘xd5 23 ♖xd5 ♗c7 24 ♘f5 g6 25 ♖fd1 gxf5 26 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 27 ♖xd7 ♕h6 28 ♗xc5! ♘xc5 29 ♕xc5 ♕c1+ 30 ♖d1 mate!

20 ♗c4 ♗c7

Black fails to save the game with 20...♘xe4 21 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 22 ♕xb7 ♖c6 23 ♘xe5 or 20...♕e7 21 ♗xe6 fxe6 22 ♘c4 ♗c7 23 ♗xc5 and 24 ♘d6+.

21 ♘d5! ♗d6 22 ♘h4! ♘xd5 23 ♘f5! g6 24 ♘xd6+ ♕xd6 25 ♗xd5 ♕c7 26 ♗xe6 fxe6 27 ♗xc5 ♖a8 28 ♕xa8 ♕xc5 29 ♕a4 ♔d8 30 ♖d2 ♔c7 31 ♖b1!

White accurately converts his clear advantage of the exchange.



31...♖d8 (31...d6 32 ♖b4! etc.) **32 ♖b5! ♕c6 33 ♕b4 d6 34 a4! ♕e8** (34...♗d7 35 ♖xd6!) **35 ♖b6 ♕f8 36 ♕a5 d5** (36...♔b8 37 c4) **37 exd5 ♔b8 38 d6 1-0**

And the second game became altogether one of the most remarkable in the history of chess: Chigorin played Black with the same inexorable consistency, developed a terrible attack on the king and concluded matters with an unexpected and spectacular queen sacrifice. 'The games of the telegraph match made a startling impression on me,' the second world champion Lasker recalled many years later. 'To crush Steinitz in such a way – this seemed incredible!'

In admitting that his opponent's victory was deserved, Steinitz wrote: 'I do not accept my defeat as conclusive evidence against the application of my theories in the two disputed positions, and still less as proofs against the doctrines of the modern school... The Russian master's tactics seem to show a conversion to the new ideas, or at any rate that the modern principles have made their impression on his style just like on that of most players of the new generation. Such moves as his twelfth, seventeenth and eighteenth in the Evans Gambit bear the distinct trademark of the modern school... It was a slow struggle and a wrestling for position, in which the Russian master gained ground on the most approved principles of modern warfare in chess.'

But Mikhail Ivanovich himself did not consider that he belonged to either the old, or the new school, explaining that 'the geniuses Morphy and Anderssen did not require any abstract understandings,' and that he, Chigorin, frequently 'was guided not by abstract theoretical understandings about the comparative strength of the pieces etc., but solely by those facts which seem correct... after a detailed and if possible accurate analysis. Each move of mine is a feasible conclusion from a number of variations, in the analysis of which theoretical "principles of play" may have only a limited significance.' Nevertheless Chigorin had a deep respect for Steinitz, which is evident if only from the letter sent to his opponent soon after the telegraph match: 'True friends of chess must be thankful to you for the interest which you constantly awake with your innovations and for your aversion to schablon-like [stereotyped] play. As known to you I do not share your theory and principles completely, which, however, does not prevent me from appreciating them.'

The telegraph battle provoked an unprecedented surge in the popularity of chess in many countries. Again the question of who was the strongest player in the world became acute. The St Petersburg Chess Society and the Havana Chess Club simultaneously made offers to organise a new Steinitz-Chigorin match for the world championship. The choice of venue was offered to the champion, and he chose Havana.

The match began on 1 January 1892 in the luxurious building of the 'Centro Asturiano' Club. On this occasion the winner was to be the first to win 10 games, and in the event of 9-9, a further three. The stake ($2000) and the time control duplicated the 'original source' Steinitz-Zukertort. The champion was now nearly 56, and he announced that this would possibly be his last match... In the first game the challenger played, as usual, 1 e4, and the world saw another 'parade of Captain Evans'!

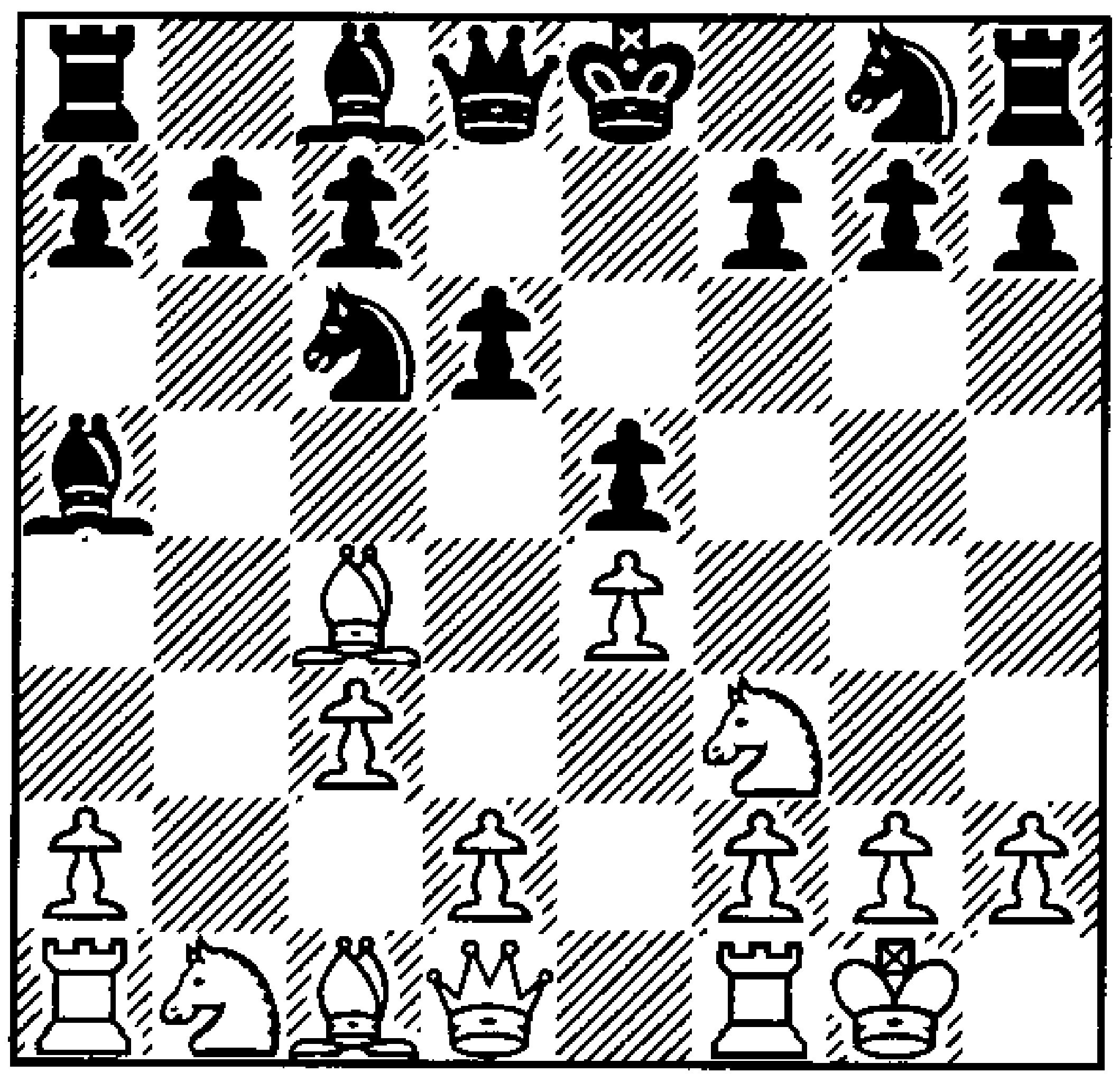
Game 24

M.Chigorin-W.Steinitz

World Championship,
Havana 1892, 1st game
Evans Gambit C52

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 b4 ♗xb4 5 c3 ♗a5 6 0-0 (6 d4!) **6...d6!**

Away with 6...♕f6?!



7 d4 ♗g4

Best of all is Lasker's 7...♗b6! (*Game No.43*), but 7...♗d7 8 ♕b3 ♕f6 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 ♖d1 h6 is also more or less sound (seventh and ninth games). The two players also tried 7...exd4 8 cxd4 ♗b6 9 ♘c3 ♘a5 10 ♗g5 f6 11 ♗f4 ♘xc4 12 ♕a4+ ♕d7 13 ♕xc4 ♕f7 14 ♘d5! with a dangerous attack (London 1883) and 8...♘f6 9 e5 dxe5 10 ♗a3 ♗e6 11 ♗b5 ♕d5 12 ♕a4 with the initiative (Hastings 1895; St Petersburg 1895/96).

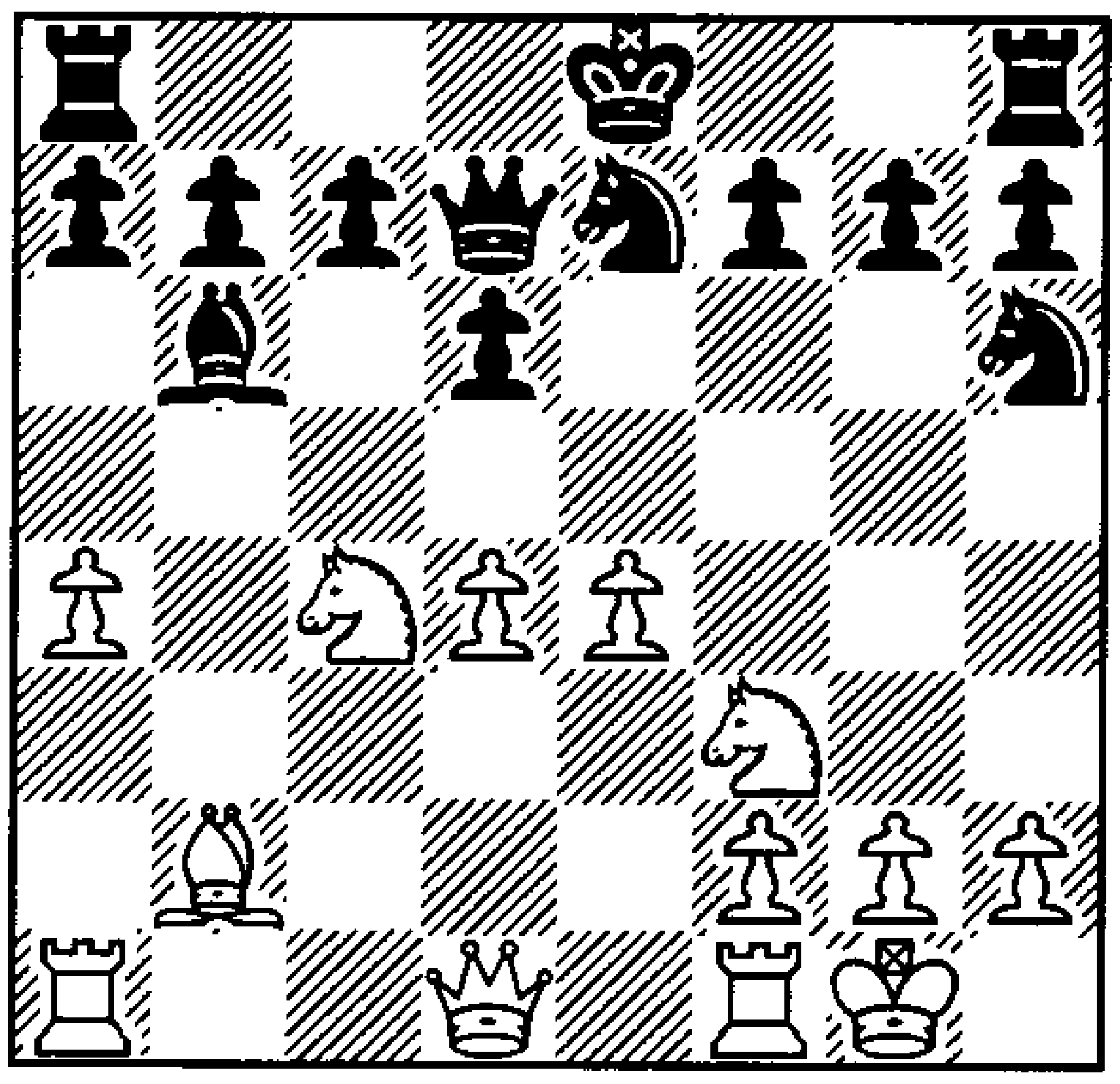
8 ♗b5?!

Later Chigorin was twice successful with 8 ♕a4, although after 8...exd4 9 cxd4 a6! (15th game) or 8...♗xf3 9 gxf3 exd4 10 cxd4 (17th game) 10...♕f6! Black should not have any opening problems.

8...exd4 9 cxd4 ♗d7 10 ♗b2 ♘ce7?

At what a price does Steinitz arrive at the chess truth! Of course, correct was 10...♘f6! 11 ♘a3 and here not 11...0-0 12 d5 ♘e7 or 12...♘b8, which brought Black draws in the third and fifth games, but 11...♘xe4! 12 d5 ♘e7 13 ♕a4 ♗c3! 14 ♖ab1 ♗xb2 15 ♖xb2 ♘c5 with a decisive material advantage (13th game).

11 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 12 ♘a3! ♘h6 13 ♘c4 ♗b6 14 a4!

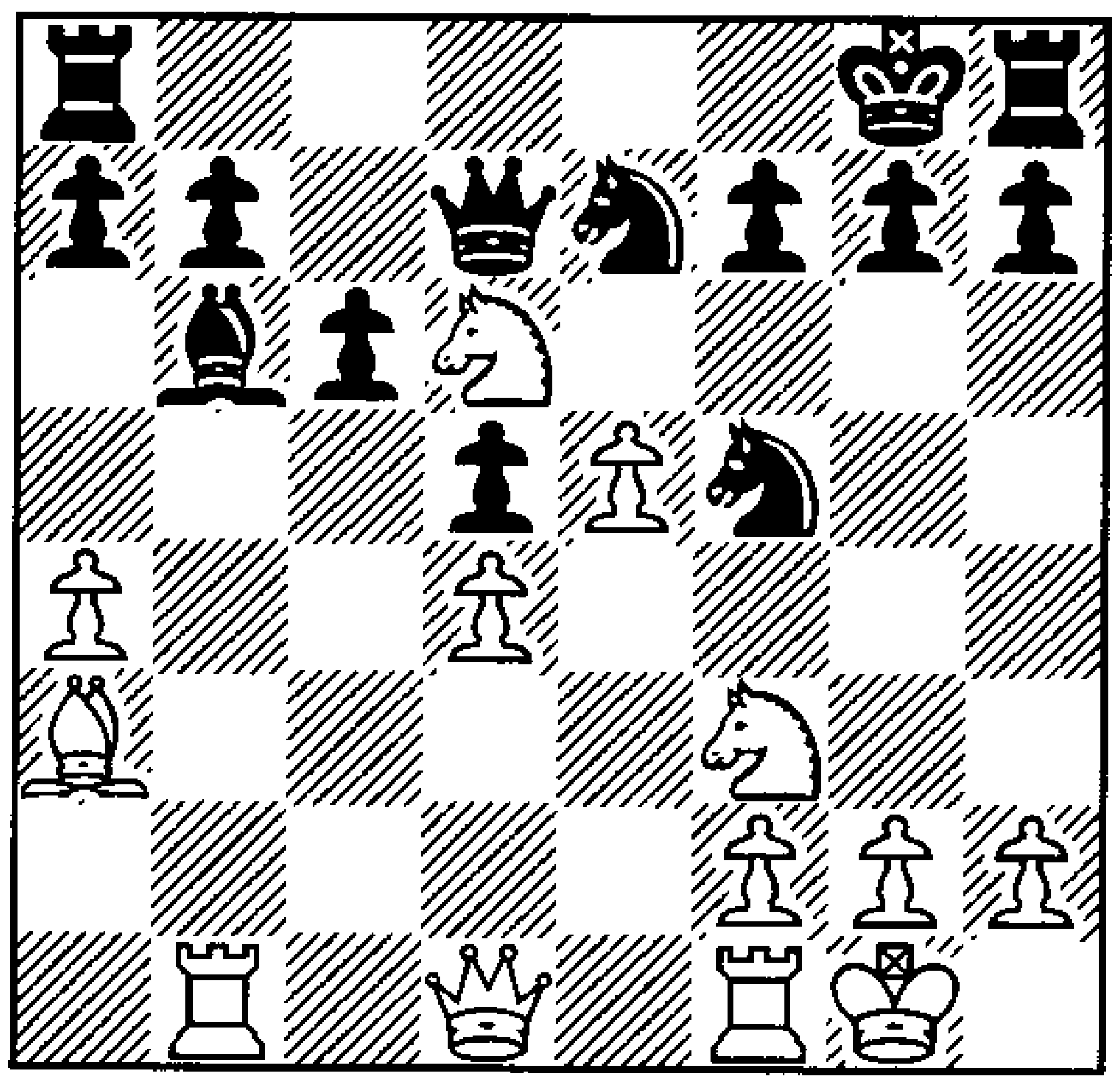


14...c6 (14...a6 15 ♕b3!; 14...a5 15 ♘xb6 cxb6 16 ♕b3 ♘c8 17 d5) **15 e5! d5**

No better was 15...dxe5 16 dxe5! ♕xd1 17 ♖axd1 0-0 18 ♖d7 or 15...♗c7 16 exd6 ♗xd6 17 ♘xd6+ ♕xd6 18 ♗a3 and 19 ♖e1.

16 ♘d6+ ♔f8 17 ♗a3 ♔g8 18 ♖b1! ♘hf5?!

If 18...♘c8, 19 a5! ♘xd6 20 exd6 ♗xa5 21 ♘e5 ♕c8 22 d7 ♕c7 23 ♕h5 ♗b6 24 ♗e7 wins, but 18...♖b8 was more tenacious.



19 ♘xf7! (much bolder than the obvious 19 a5; this knight sacrifice was published right round the world) **19...♔xf7 20 e6+ ♔xe6 21 ♘e5 ♕c8**

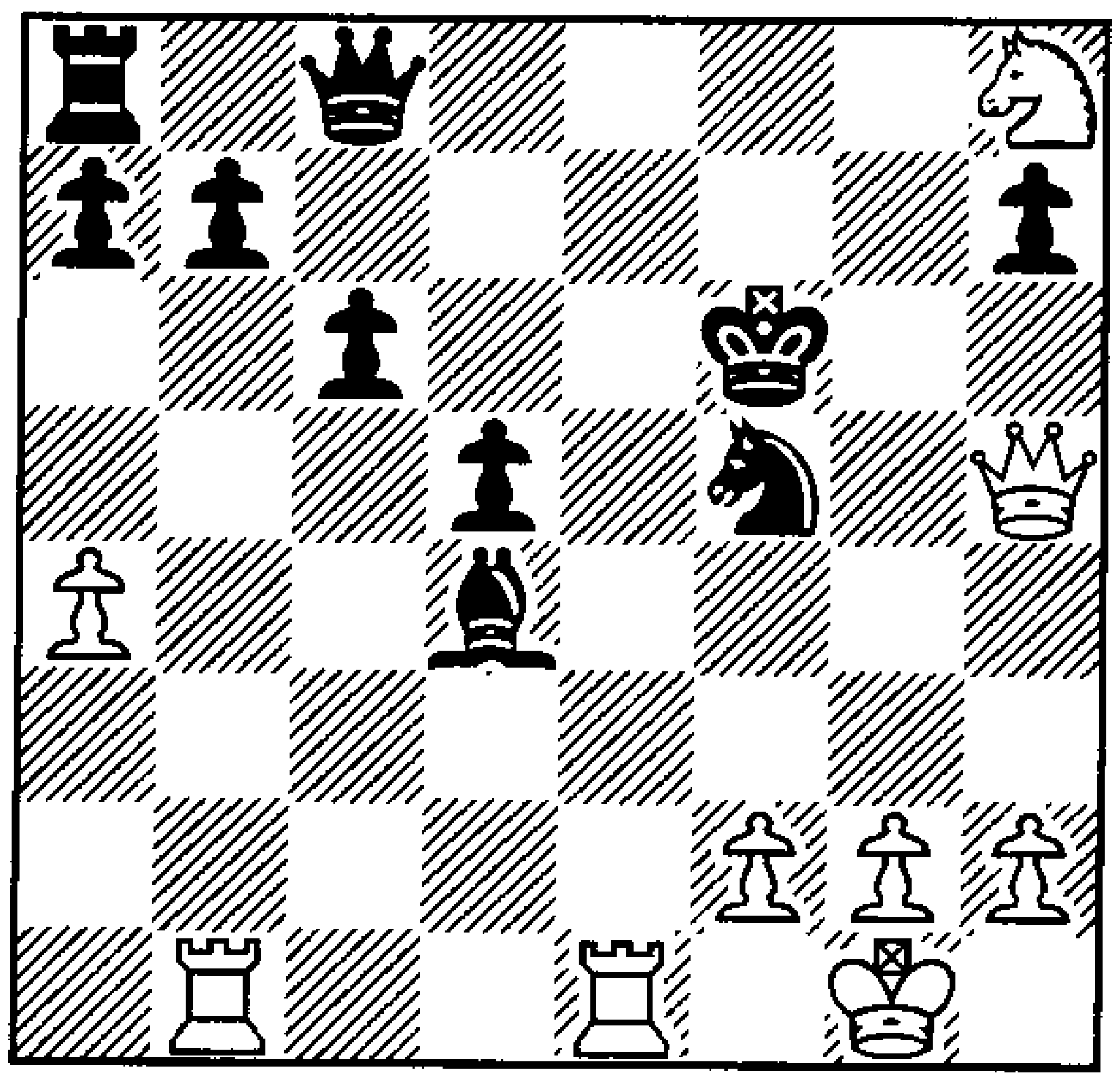
Or 21...♕e8 22 ♖e1 ♔f6 23 ♗xe7+! etc.

22 ♖e1 ♔f6 23 ♕h5! g6 (23...♘g6 24 g4!) **24 ♗xe7+ ♔xe7**

Of course, not 24...♘xe7? 25 ♕h4+ g5 26 ♘g4+ ♔f7 27 ♕xg5.

25 ♘xg6+ ♔f6 26 ♘xh8 ♗xd4

Equally dismal was 26...♕xh8 27 ♖e5 ♕c8 28 g4 or 26...♕d7 27 ♖b3! ♖xh8 28 ♖f3 ♖g8 29 ♖e5 ♖g5 30 ♕h6+ ♖g6 31 ♖exf5+ ♕xf5 32 ♕f8+.



27 ♖b3 ♕d7 28 ♖f3 ♖xh8 29 g4 ♖g8 30 ♕h6+ ♖g6 31 ♖xf5+ 1-0

In view of 31...♕xf5 32 ♕f8+ Black resigned.

Again a horrible defeat... Fortunately for the champion, after this he gained some respite in the form of two draws and by the fourth game he had completely restored his mental balance. That day the chess world finally saw the real Steinitz!

According to his teaching, a flank attack should be parried by a counter in the centre, and therefore it can prove successful only with a closed or well supported centre. It was this that Steinitz demonstrated in the following game, the great depth of which lies not in the pretty concluding attack, but in where this attack arose, its source. It was here that the difference between the opponents in the understanding of position was revealed. Of course, Chigorin was more 'advanced' than Zukertort, and he played chess on a broader scale, but even he could not compete with Steinitz in positional play! It is an amazing game, inexplicable for the 19th century: Steinitz appeared to manoeuvre on the first three ranks, but everywhere things turned out badly for Black. In a quiet, semi-closed position his problems piled up like a snowball...

Game 25
W.Steinitz-M.Chigorin
World Championship,
Havana 1892, 4th game
Ruy Lopez C65

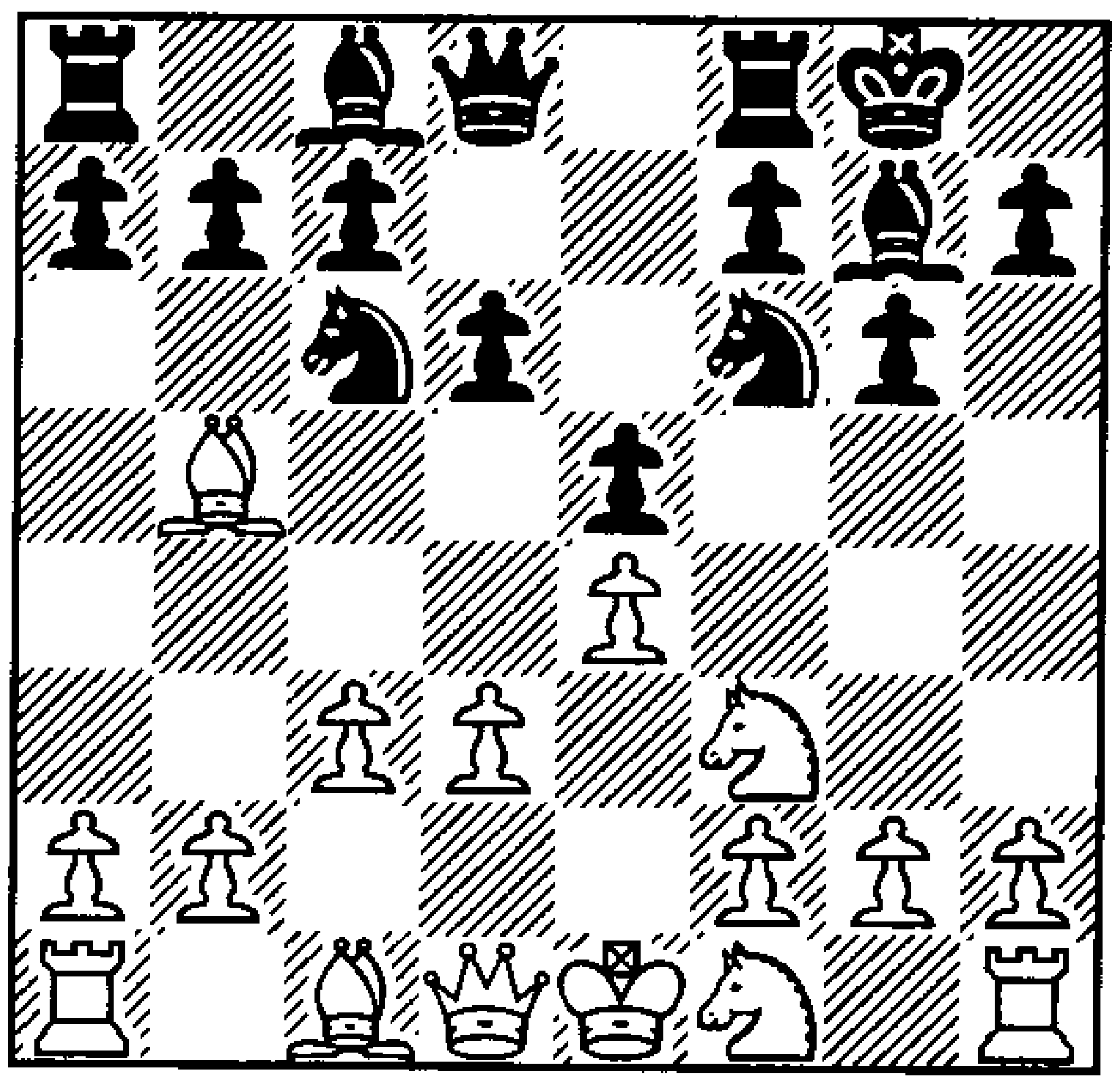
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6 4 d3

Not aiming for an opening advantage.

4...d6 5 c3 g6

A game from the Steinitz-Lasker match (USA/Canada 2nd matchgame 1894) went 5...♗d7 6 ♗a4 g6 7 ♘bd2 ♗g7 8 ♘c4 0-0 9 ♘e3 ♘e7 10 ♗b3 c6, and after 11 h4! ♕c7 12 ♘g5 d5 13 f3! ♖ad8 (13...h6!?) 14 g4! dxe4 15 fxe4 h6?! 16 ♕f3! ♗e8 17 ♗c2 ♘d7 18 ♘h3 ♘c5 19 ♘f2 b5 20 g5 h5 21 ♘f5! gxf5?! (21...♘e6) 22 exf5 f6 23 g6 ♘xg6 24 fxg6 ♗xg6 25 ♖g1 e4? (25...♗xd3! Chigorin) 26 dxe4 ♔h7 27 ♖xg6! ♔xg6 28 ♕f5+ ♔f7 29 ♕xh5+ ♔g8 30 ♕xc5 White soon won. Also a splendid victory!

6 ♘bd2 ♗g7 7 ♘f1 0-0



8 ♗a4

Preserving the bishop (unlike Anderssen – *Game No.13*). The second game went 8 ♘e3 d5!, and White had to make the unwieldy move 9 ♕c2. And after 8 ♕e2 Steinitz suggested 8...♗d7 9 ♗a4?! ♘d4! 10 cxd4 ♗xa4 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 ♘xe5 ♗b5 with an excellent game.

8...♘d7?!

An important moment in the opening: Black is at the crossroads. 'By playing my knight via c5 to e6, I was intending to prevent d3-d4 in the immediate future, and also the (unrealisable) plan with ...f7-f5.' (Chigorin) Fully in the spirit of the new school! Although simpler was 8...d5!? 9 ♕e2 (unfavourable is 9 ♗xc6?! bxc6 10 ♘xe5 ♕e8 11 f4 dxe4 etc.) 9...♕d6 10 ♗c2 b6 (10...♗e6!?) 11 ♘g3 ♗a6 12 0-0 dxe4 13 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 14 ♕xe4 ♗b7 with equal chances, as occurred in the 14th game.

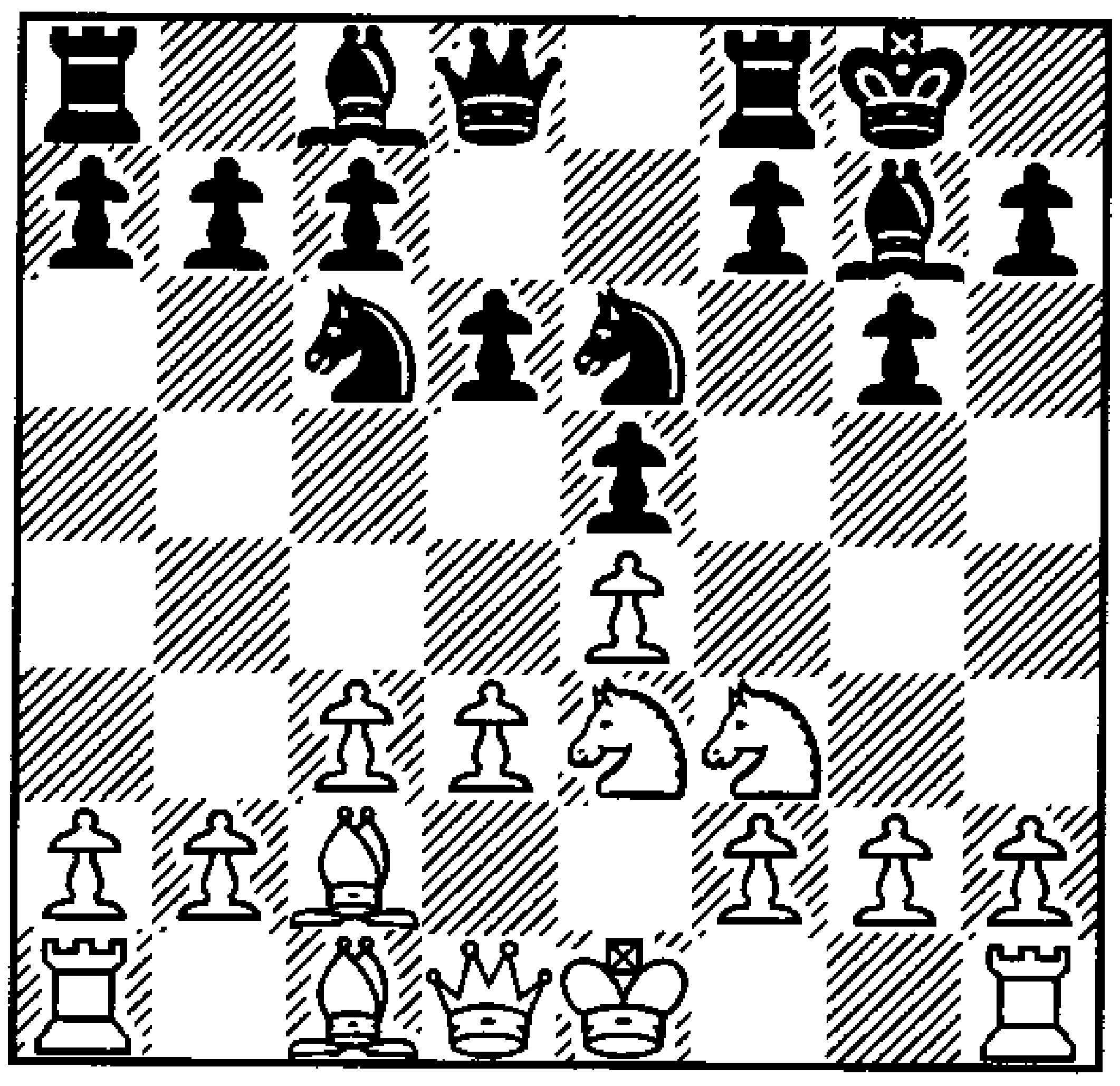
8...a6 was also suggested, for example: 9 ♘e3 b5 10 ♗b3 ♘a5 11 ♗c2 d5 (Euwe) or 9 ♘g3 b5 10 ♗b3 d5 11 ♕e2 ♖e8 12 0-0 ♗b7 (Keres), both with equal chances. In short, White has nothing in particular, and he is even somewhat behind in development. On the other hand, there are nuances in the position that cause Chigorin a certain discomfort: he is unable to initiate a concrete tactical battle. And Steinitz subtly exploits this factor!

9 ♘e3 ♘c5

'9...f5 was recommended, and if 10 b4, then 10...f4 11 ♘d5 g5 with a complicated game. However, after 10 exf5 gxf5 11 ♘d5 the chances are with White.' (Neishtadt)

10 ♗c2 ♘e6

But not immediately 10...f5 on account of 11 exf5 gxf5 12 d4! But now it would seem difficult for White to do anything active, whereas Black is intending ...f7-f5, or perhaps ...♘e7 and ...d6-d5.



11 h4!

'In general this is not especially dangerous early in the game, but in the given instance I noticed a weak point on the enemy kingside and I am not to be trifled with: despite my age, I can still bite.' (Steinitz)

I think that this move must have shocked Chigorin: how is it that White is suddenly beginning an attack?! Steinitz must be punished, but how? And Mikhail Ivanovich decided to reply (following the classical rules!) with a counter-blow in the centre, although in the given instance this proves to be an empty blow, since White's centre is securely fortified.

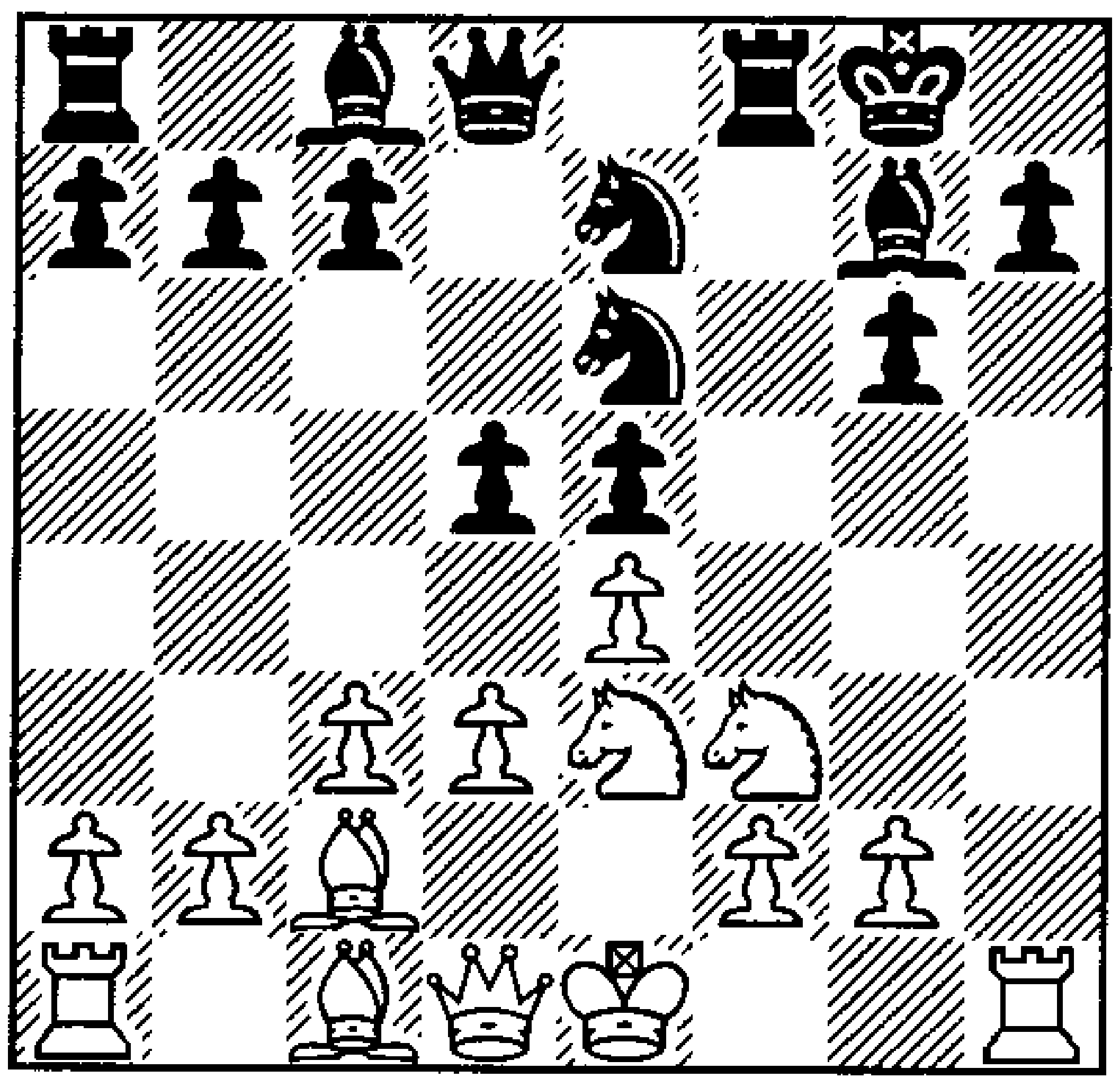
11...♘e7

11...h6?! 12 h5 g5 (Mason) is dubious in view of 13 ♘f5 and d3-d4! with advantage to White. 'I can only regret that I myself did not bite, by playing 11...f5. The consequences of this counterattack are very hard to foresee. Here are the immediate ones: 12 h5 f4 13 ♘d5 g5 14 h6 ♗f6 15 ♗b3 ♔h8 or 12 exf5 gxf5 13 ♘d5 ♘e7 14 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 15 ♘g5 h6 (15...♕e8!?).' (Chigorin)

'In fact 11...f5 was risky, to say the least: after 12 exf5 gxf5 White should play 13 d4! with excellent attacking chances.' (Neishtadt) Analysis demonstrates the correctness of this evaluation.

12 h5 d5 (but not 12...g5?! 13 h6!) **13 hxg6 fxg6?**

A serious, and probably even decisive mistake: the 'Spanish' bishop at c2, which has hitherto been dozing, suddenly comes alive. Correct, of course, was 13...hxg6 (towards the centre!), as initially Chigorin wanted to play. In this case, as he put it, 'Black would have succeeded in putting his king in a safe place': 14 exd5 ♘xd5 15 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 16 ♗h6 ♗xh6 17 ♖xh6 ♔g7 18 ♕d2 ♘f4.' It is true that 14 ♕e2! is stronger, then ♗d2 and 0-0-0 with the initiative, but this is a very sharp position and still a long way from a 'clear plus for White' evaluation (the play could have developed along the lines of the game with Lasker, mentioned in the notes to Black's fifth move).



14 exd5! ♘xd5 15 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 16 ♗b3 ♕c6 17 ♕e2

Preventing ...e5-e4. Gradually coming into play are long-term positional factors, of which Chigorin was not even aware. It turns out that the chronic defects in Black's position (in particular the weakness of his king) can no longer be eliminated.

17...♗d7

Chigorin later lamented that he had not played 17...a5, giving the line 18 a4! (18 ♗h6 ♗xh6 19 ♖xh6 a4 etc.) 18...♕b6 19 ♗xe6+(?) ♗xe6 20 ♘g5 ♗f5 21 ♘xh7 ♖fd8. However, Neishtadt recommends 19 ♕c2 and ♗e3, and I – 19 ♗c4! with an obvious advantage.

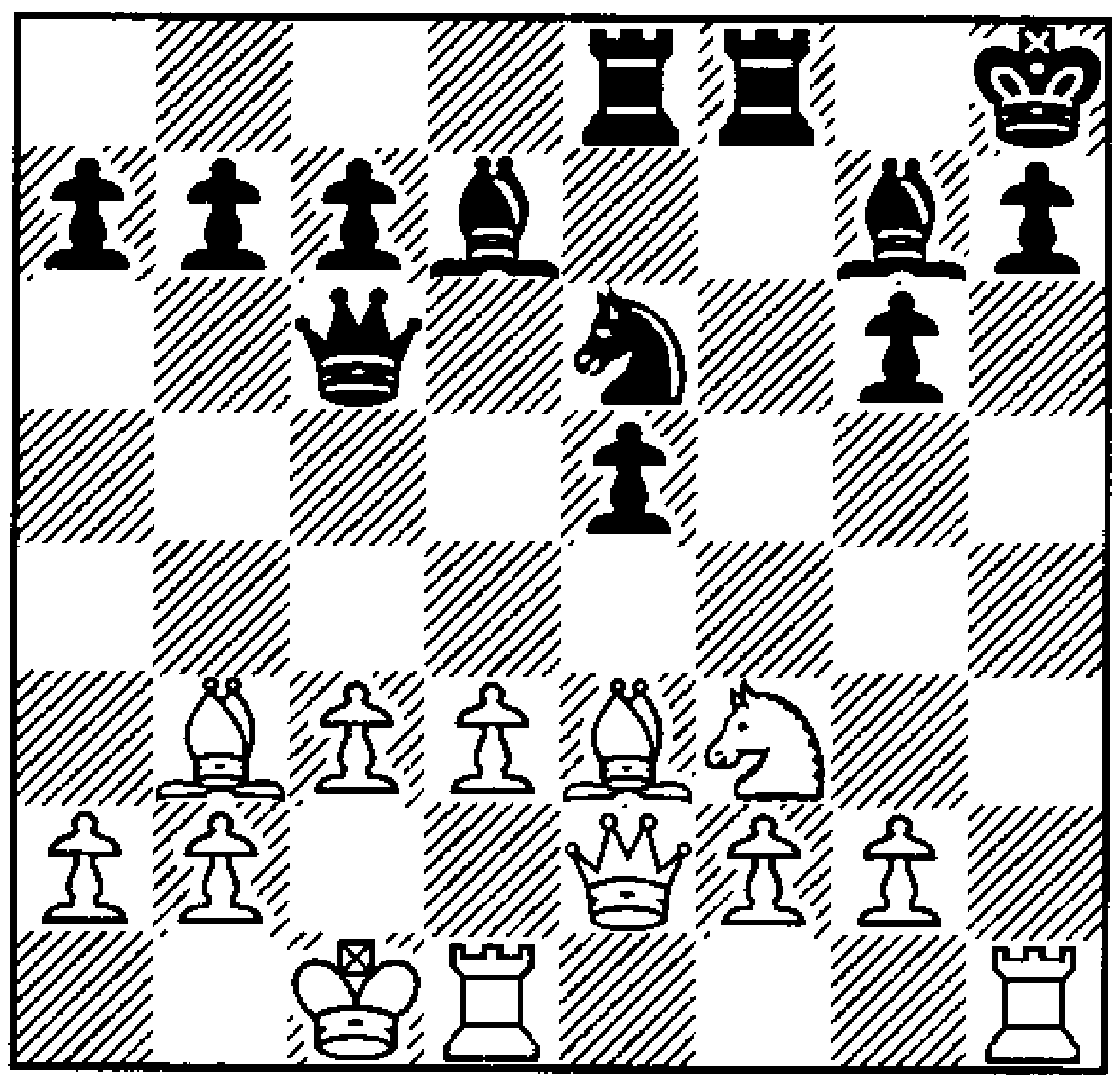
18 ♗e3

There was no point at all in playing 18 ♘xe5? ♕xg2 19 ♘xd7 ♕xh1+ 20 ♔d2 ♔h8 21 ♗xe6 ♕h2 22 ♘xf8 ♖xf8 with equal chances.

18...♔h8

Steinitz suggested 18...♖f7 19 0-0-0 ♗h8, but after 20 d4! Black's position is unenviable.

19 0-0-0 (I think that this late queenside castling must have also shocked Chigorin: not bad for a Ruy Lopez!) **19...♖ae8**



20 ♕f1! (preparing the thematic d3-d4, after which the attack on the king will become irresistible) **20...a5**

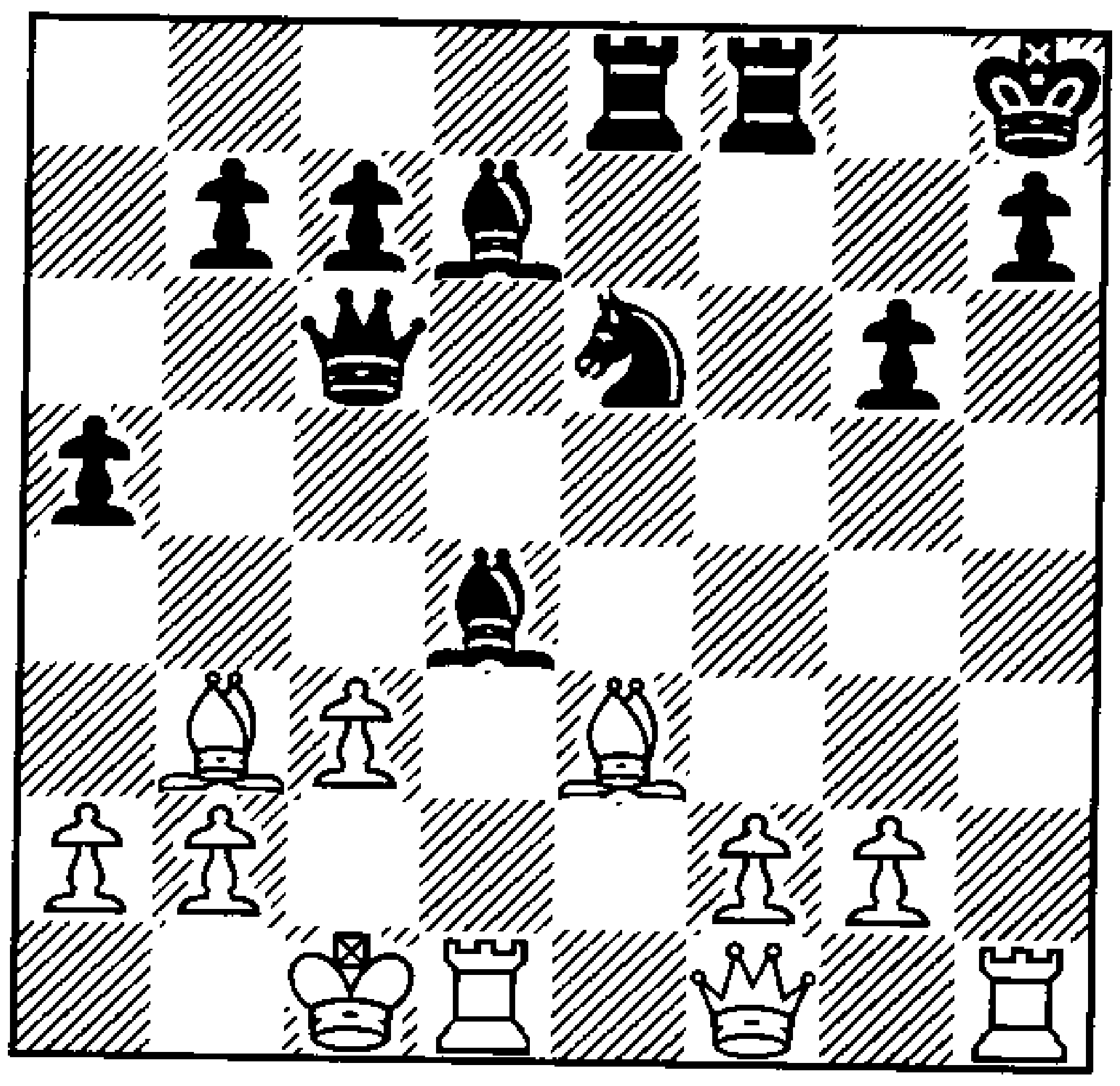
'An empty stroke, testifying to Black's confusion. 20...♖f5 and ...♘f8 was better.' (Euwe) But, in my opinion, after 21 ♔b1 White has a significant advantage.

Both Steinitz and Chigorin thought that 20...♘f4 was the most logical, although then White has a pleasant choice between 21 ♘g5 h6 22 ♘f7+ ♔h7 23 d4! ♕xg2 24 ♕xg2 ♘xg2 25 ♘xh6! (Ravinsky) and the immediate 21 d4! ♗g4 (21...exd4 22 ♖xd4!) 22 ♘g5 h6 23 f3 (Neishtadt).

21 d4! exd4

Forced, in view of the threat of d4-d5.

22 ♘xd4 ♗xd4



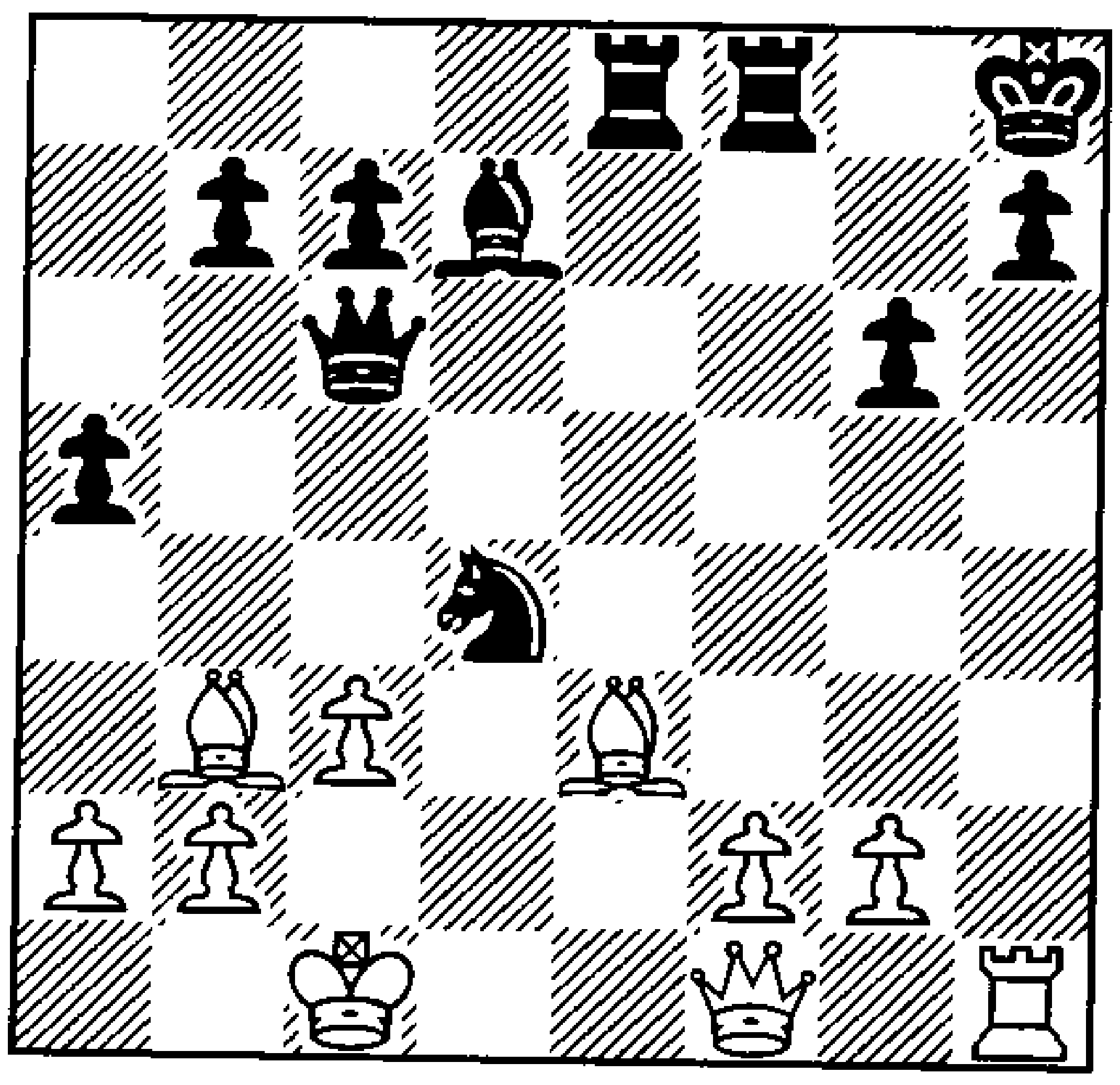
The exchange of this bishop looks suicidal. 22...♘xd4? was even worse: 23 ♖xh7+! ♔xh7 24 ♕h1+, and 22...♕a6 23 ♗c4 ♕a8 24 ♘f3 was also unattractive. As the lesser evil Neishtadt recommended 22...♕e4 23 ♗c2 ♕g4 24 f3 ♕g3 25 ♘f5! (25 ♘e2 ♕e5) 25...gxf5 26 ♖xd7, but 24...♘xd4! 25 ♖xd4 ♕e6 is better, and therefore, in my view, 23 ♘f3! ♕c6 24 ♕d3 with a winning attack is correct.

23 ♖xd4!

The culmination of White's deep strategy.

23...♘xd4?

Disastrous. '23...♖e7 would have prevented the rook sacrifice, but I did not see any escape after 24 ♖dh4. If 24...♖ff7, then 25 g3 with the threat of 26 ♗d4+ ♔g8 27 ♕d3 and 28 ♕g6, against which there is no defence.' (Chigorin) 25...♔g8 26 ♕d3 ♕b5 is perhaps more tenacious, although objectively Black's position is hopeless.



24 ♖xh7+!

A highly dramatic finish! If the regular 3 ♗b5 and the march h4-h5xg6 are disregarded, this is the first crossing of the demarcation line. White crosses the line – and immediately it is mate!

24...♔xh7 25 ♕h1+ ♔g7 26 ♗h6+ ♔f6 27 ♕h4+ ♔e5 28 ♕xd4+ 1-0

Black resigned one move before checkmate.

A very deep game, demonstrating that Steinitz's superiority over his contemporaries was in his global understanding of chess. Here he outplayed his opponent simply and imperceptibly, without moving beyond the third rank. Moreover, this was no ordinary opponent, but one of the most outstanding players of that era, a real contender for the supreme title. But he was unable to do anything! Steinitz as though looked into the future: his stealthy plan with d2-d3, c2-c3, ♘d2-f1-e3 and ♗c2 became the prototype of modern manoeuvring play...

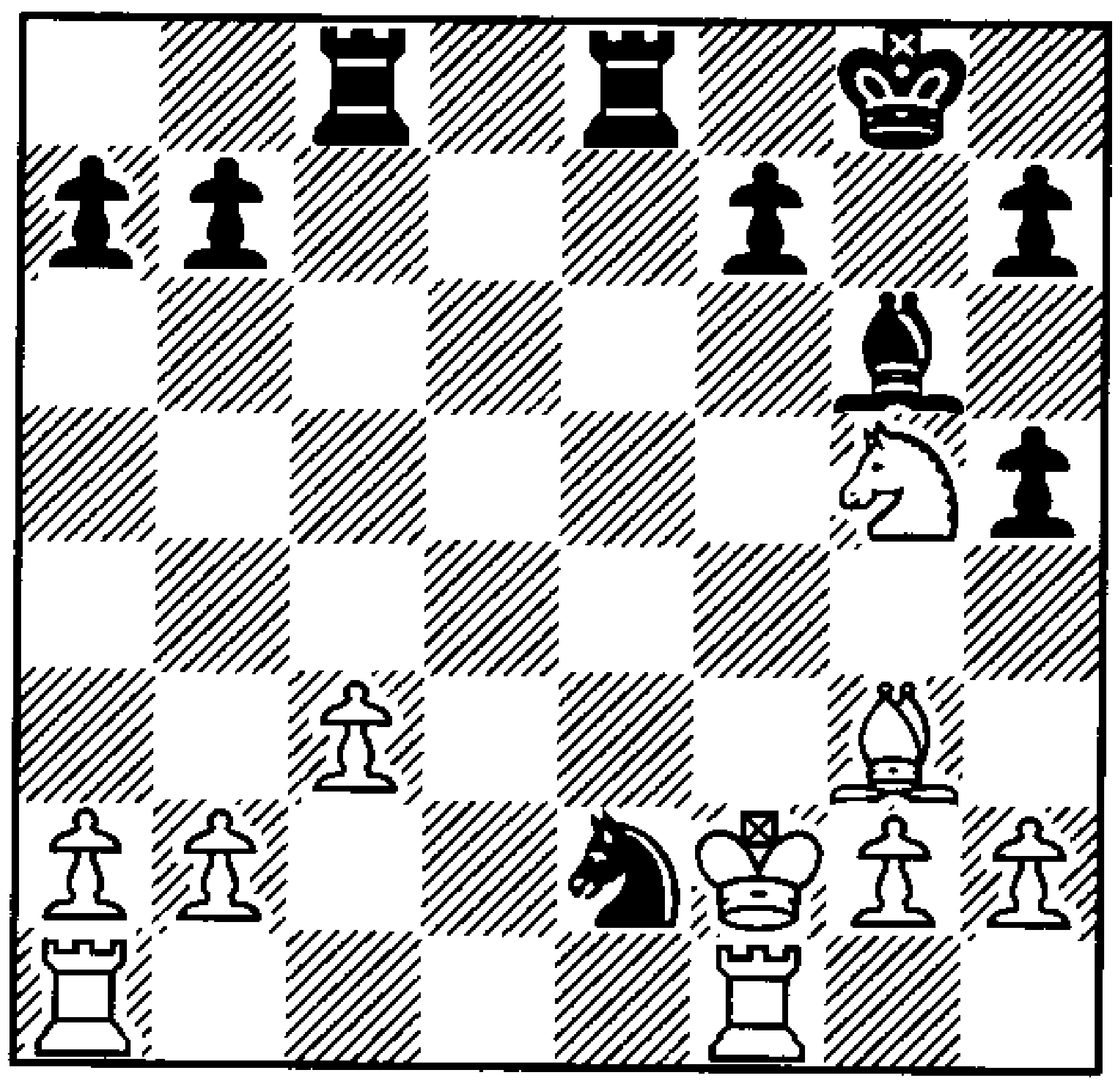
This wounding defeat somewhat disheartened Chigorin: after a drawing respite he also lost the sixth game. But then he drew inspiration and resoundingly announced his claim to the throne, by gaining a whole series of wins and seizing the lead for a long time: 5-3 (=4), 7-6... In the 18th game Steinitz managed to level the scores, but after that Chigorin again went ahead: 8-7. Here, by his own admission, he was unable to withstand the oppressive tropical heat and he clearly weakened (his older opponent proved more resilient – perhaps because he had been to Cuba more often): he lost the 20th and 22nd games. And yet he still cherished hopes of winning the match...

The opening of the 23rd game – a King's Gambit – was played amazingly badly by the challenger and he quickly reached a difficult ending. Then, however, some genuine miracles began.

Game 26

M.Chigorin-W.Steinitz

World Championship Match,
Havana 1892, 23rd game



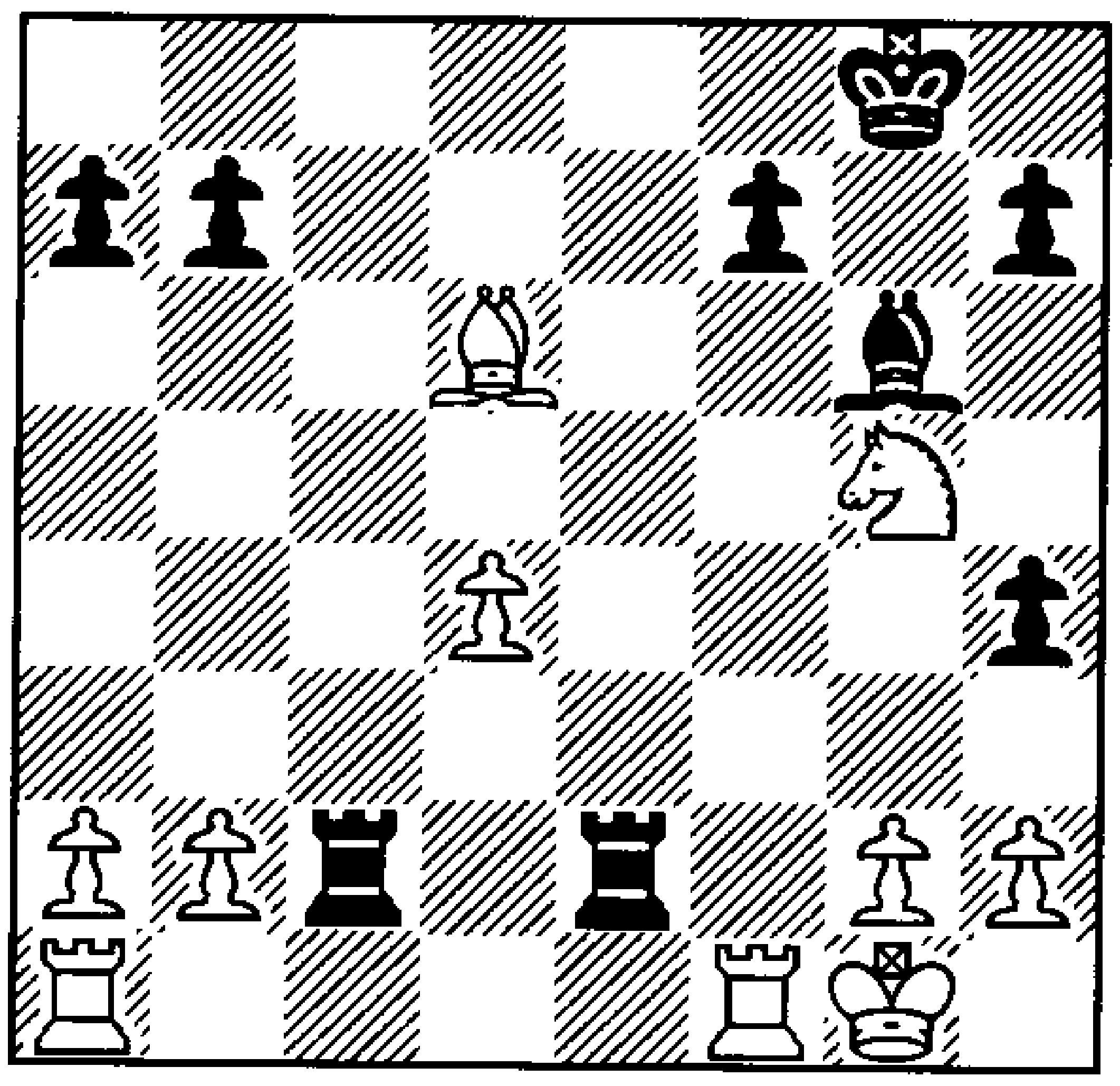
22...h4?

The unpretentious 22...♘xg3 keeps an edge: 23 ♔xg3 (if 23 hxg3 ♖e5 24 ♘f3 there is the manoeuvre 24...♖b5! and the pawn cannot be held – after 25 b3 ♖xc3 White has a difficult position) 23...♖e2 24 ♖f2 h4+ 25 ♔f3 ♗h5+ 26 g4 ♗xg4+ 27 ♔g2 ♖ce8 etc.

23 ♗d6 ♘d4?

A very strange decision! Black suddenly gives up a piece, instead of playing 23...♖cd8 (23...♖c6!?) 24 ♖fd1 (24 ♖ad1 ♘c1!) 24...♗h5, e.g. 25 ♘f3 (25 ♖d2 ♘f4!) 25...h3 26 gxh3 (26 g3 ♘g1!) 26...f5 27 ♖d2 f4 with counterplay.

24 cxd4 ♖c2+ 25 ♔g1 ♖ee2



26 ♖ae1!

This is what Steinitz overlooked!

26...♖xg2+ 27 ♔h1 ♔g7 28 ♖e8!

'28 ♖e7 ♖gf2 29 ♖xf2 ♖xf2 30 ♖xb7 h6 31 ♔g1 would have won more surely for White,' writes Chigorin, overlooking the simple 28...♖xg5! Also inaccurate is 28 ♗e5+?! ♔f8 29 d5 ♖xg5 30 d6 ♗f5 31 ♗f6 'winning' (Steinitz), in view of 31...♖gg2 32 ♖xf5 ♖xh2+ 33 ♔g1 ♖cg2+ 34 ♔f1 h3 or even 31...♗d7! 32 ♗xg5 ♗c6+ 33 ♖f3 ♗xf3+ 34 ♔g1 ♗c6 35 ♗h6+ ♔g8 36 ♖e5 ♖g2+ 37 ♔f1 ♖g6 with a guaranteed draw.

28...f5

If 28...♖xg5?? 29 ♗f8+ ♔g8 30 ♗h6 mate.

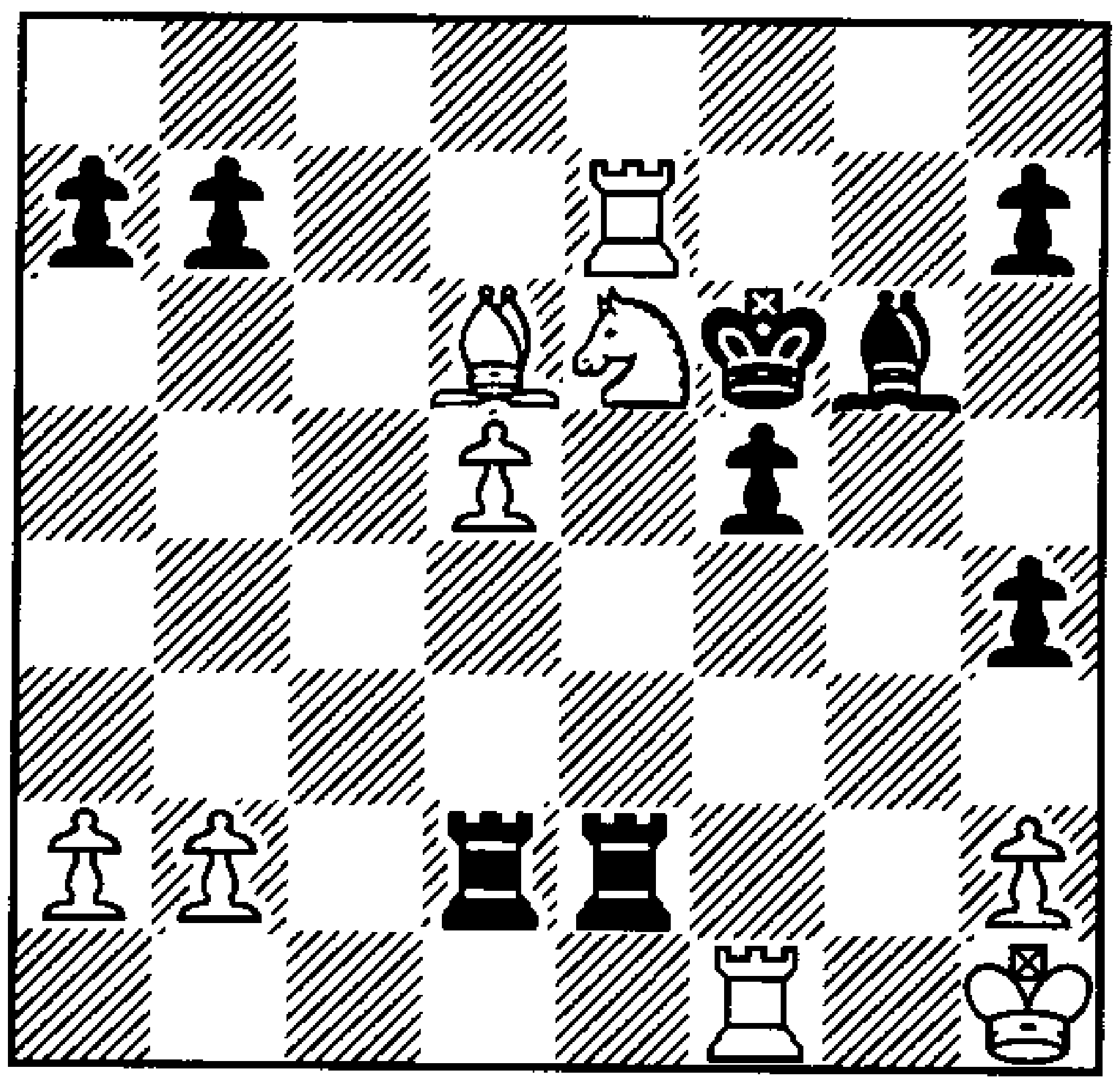
29 ♘e6+?!

Time-trouble! 29 ♖e7+ would have won more easily, for example: 29...♔h6 (29...♔f6?? 30 ♘e4 mate) 30 ♗f4!? (the computer makes this move instead of more normal 30 ♘e6 ♖xb2 31 ♗f4+ ♔h5 32 h3 with the threat of ♘g7 mate) 30...♔h5 31 ♘xh7 ♗xh7 32 ♖xh7+ ♔g6 33 ♖xb7 ♖xb2 34 ♖xa7 ♖xa2 35 ♖xa2 ♖xa2 36 d5 and wins, or 29...♔g8 30 ♘e6 f4 31 ♘xf4 ♖xh2+ 32 ♔g1 h3 (32...♖xb2 33 ♗e5! ♗f7 34 ♖d7 also wins for White) 33 ♖fe1! (but not 33 ♗e5? ♖h1+! 34 ♔xh1 ♗e4+) 33...♖xb2 34 ♖d7 ♗f7 35 ♗e5! ♗xa2 36 ♗f6, weaving a mating net.

29...♔f6 30 ♖e7 ♖ge2!

More tenacious than 30...♖xb2 31 ♘c5 ♖xh2+ 32 ♗xh2 ♔xe7 33 d5.

31 d5 ♖cd2



And here Chigorin did not bother to seal his move, although the arbiter had already prepared the envelope (the time control, I should remind you, was 30 moves in two hours, after which the game was adjourned).

32 ♗b4?? (truly the 'blunder of the century!')
32...♖xh2+ 0-1

In view of 33 ♔g1 ♖dg2 mate White resigned. And yet after the cool 32 ♖xb7 he would have retained every chance of winning! 'If 32...♖xe6 (32...♖xd5? 33 ♘f4) there would have followed 33 dxe6 ♖xd6 34 e7 ♗e8 35 ♖c1.' (Chigorin) Neishtadt adds the variations 32...f4 33 ♖xf4+ ♗f5 34 ♖f1 ♖xd5 35 ♘g7! ♖xd6 36 ♘xf5 and 32...h3 33 ♗f4 ♖f2 34 ♗g5+! ♔e5 35 ♖e1+ ♖de2 36 ♖xe2+ ♖xe2 37 ♔g1; true, here 37...♖g2+ 38 ♔f1 ♔xd5 39 ♘f4+ ♔c6 40 ♖xa7 ♖xg5 prolongs the struggle, and therefore more accurate is 34 ♖b1! ♖xd5 35 ♖e1 (threatening ♗g5 mate) 35...♖g2 36 ♗g3! winning.

Steinitz considered 32...♗h5!? (with the threat of ...♗f3+) 33 ♖b3 ♗f7, when there is a choice between 34 ♗b8 and 34 ♘f4! ♖xh2+ 35 ♔g1 with a won game. In my view, White also wins by 33 ♖g7!? ♖xe6 (33...♖xd5? 34 ♘f4) 34 dxe6 ♔xg7 35 ♗e5+ ♔g8 36 ♖xf5 h3 37 ♔g1 ♖g2+ 38 ♔f1 ♗g6 39 e7 ♗f7 40 b4 ♖g6 41 ♗d4.

Thus the score became +10 -8 =5 in favour of Steinitz, and he retained the title of world champion. 'It is unlikely that we will ever forget that decisive moment,' wrote the Cuban press. 'At the 23rd game more than a thousand people were present, and all were discussing Chigorin's brilliant play. At any minute Steinitz's resignation was expected. Suddenly there was an extraordinary commotion: the spectators stood up, and they all saw how the Russian master, nervy, with a changed face, was holding his head in his hands: he had moved away the bishop that was defending him against mate. "What a pity!" repeated hundreds of voices. What a vexatious and terrible ending to a wonderful match for the world championship! Chigorin can feel proud: never was Steinitz so close to defeat as now.'

And it was indeed a staggeringly dramatic match, a fierce clash between the Artist and the Scientist. Chigorin probably played more prettily, but Steinitz played more correctly. The world champion himself called his win 'a Pyrrhic victory' and admitted: 'It remains a fact that I am unable to contend with the Russian master as successfully as I have contended with the other great masters, including Zukertort.'

However, it was right that Steinitz won. If he was to some extent a positional dogmatist, a player of strict rules, then Chigorin was rather a tactical dogmatist, an adventure lover (in this sense his follower became Alekhine, but already in another cycle of the development of the game). Steinitz's theory was after all more soundly based, since it encompassed more types of positions, and Steinitz defeated Chigorin, in particular, thanks to his greater range of vision. In 'his' positions – with the initiative, with an attack – Mikhail Ivanovich was invincible, but in 'foreign' positions, where the correct paths had to be patiently groped for, he made mistakes and was inferior. And overall he all the time lacked a little something...

Passions around Mount Olympus

After another Steinitz coronation, the chess world asked the eternal question: who would be the champion's next opponent? Or more precisely, given his advancing years, who would be the next chess king?

The most realistic challenger looked to be the 30-year-old German champion Doctor Siegbert Tarrasch, who had won the important tournaments in Breslau (1889), Manchester (1890) and Dresden (1892) in brilliant fashion. He could have played Steinitz even after Manchester, but he declined the tempting offer of the Havana Chess Club, stating that he was occupied with his medical practice.

Also clearly on the up was the 24-year-old Emanuel Lasker. But for the present he had not achieved sufficient successes, and therefore Tarrasch quite reasonably declined his challenge to a candidates match. Although the Doctor would then have probably been able to defeat both the inexperienced Lasker, and the wounded Steinitz, he chose another course – he challenged the recent 'number one' candidate Chigorin to a match!

This match (St Petersburg, autumn 1893) is deserving of a special mention, since it became a truly champion-like battle – not only by its format (the first to win 10 games; if 9-9, then a draw), but also by the richness of its chess content. The contestants fought literally to the last pawn: in the first nine games and the six final ones there was not a single draw!

Victory would have given Tarrasch every right to a match with Steinitz, and the Doctor from Nuremberg briskly got down to business: 1-0, 4-2... However, Chigorin had no intention of yielding, especially on his home ground: by winning the seventh and eighth games in excellent style, he levelled the scores.

Game 27

M.Chigorin-S.Tarrasch

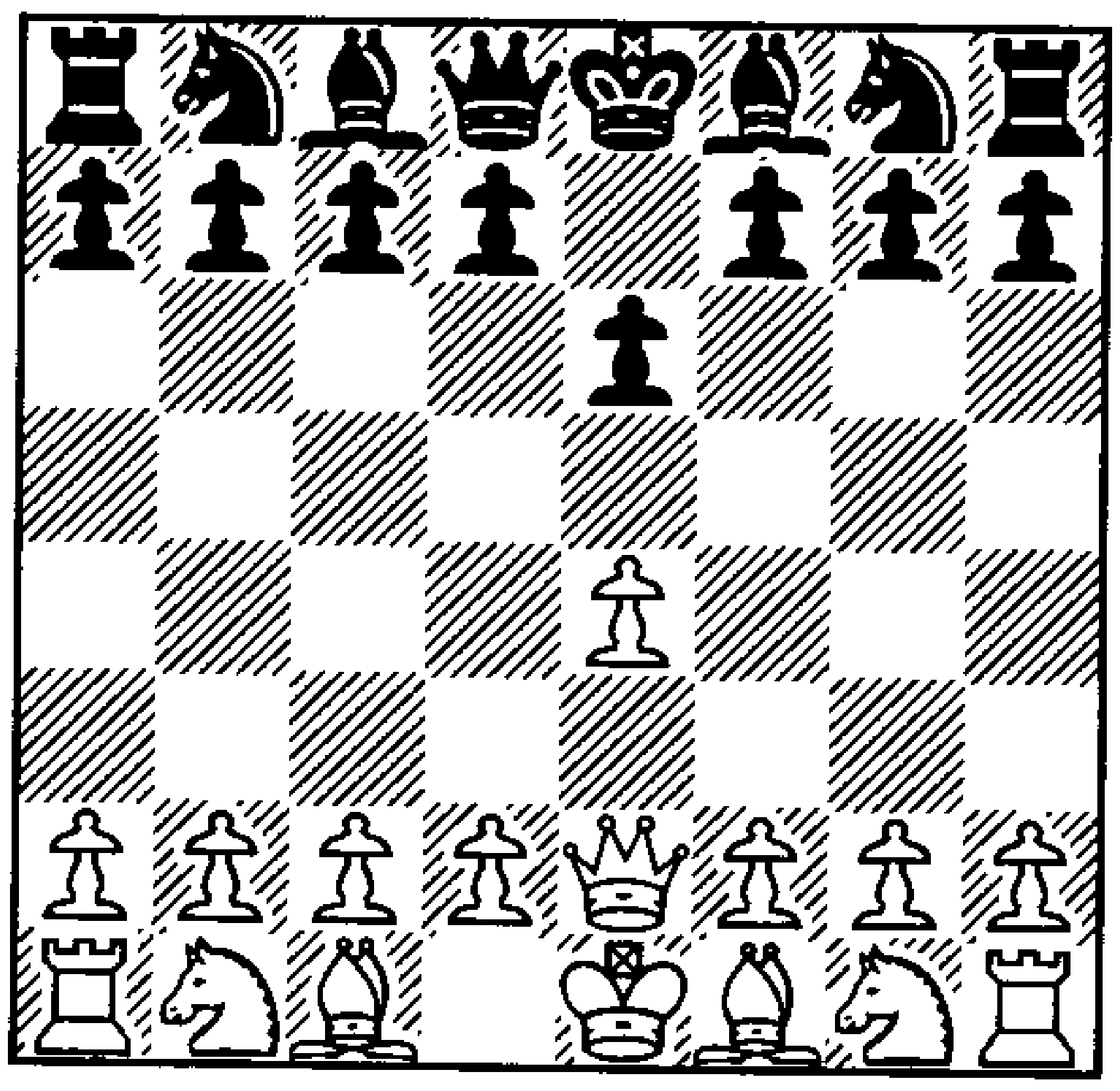
Match, St Petersburg 1893, 8th game

French Defence C00

1 e4 e6 2 ♕e2!?

Chigorin's patent move (in Tarrasch's opinion, 'ugly'), which was tested in the match with an overall score of +5 -3 =2. Chigorin described how this idea was evoked by Steinitz's play in one of their games – 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6 4 d3 d6 5 c3 g6 6 ♘bd2 ♗g7 7 ♘f1 0-0 8 ♗a4 d5 9 ♕e2! (Havana 14th matchgame 1892): 'In this way Steinitz avoided the need to take e4xd5. It was this that gave rise to my initial plan with g2-g3, ♗g2 and d2-d3, which was later varied.'

Usually Tarrasch gained good positions from the opening and, incidentally, scored textbook wins in the fourth and 14th games, where 'White's attack on the kingside was halted with the help of counterplay on the queenside.' But on the whole, this variation, which is very close to King's Indian set-ups (which at that time were still unusual), conformed with Chigorin's original style: in the resulting complicated and obscure play he was able to confuse his formidable, logically thinking opponent, the outstanding pupil of the Steinitz School.



2...c5

Later Tarrasch switched to 2...♗e7 (*Game No.30*). Also possible is 2...♘c6 (2...e5 3 f4!) 3 ♘f3 e5 4 c3 ♘f6 5 d3 ♗e7 6 g3 d5 with equality, but take a look at this 'King's Indian Attack' as performed by Mikhail Ivanovich: 7 ♗g2 dxe4?! 8 dxe4 ♗d6?! 9 ♘bd2 0-0 10 ♘c4 ♗e6 11 0-0 ♘e8 12 b4! a6 13 ♖d1 ♕e7 14 a4! f6 15 ♗a3 b5? (this is already a direct mistake: Black faced problems that were too difficult for those times!) 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♘e3 ♖b8 18 ♗c1 ♘d8 19 ♖a7 ♘c6 20 ♖a6 ♘d8 21 ♘d5 ♕d7 22 ♘e1 c6 23 ♘e3 ♕b7 24 ♖a1 ♗c7 25 ♘f5! ♗b6 26 ♗e3! (weakness of the c5-square!) 26...♗xe3 27 ♕xe3 ♖f7 28 ♘d3 ♗c8? 29 ♘xe5 fxe5 30 ♖xd8 ♗e6 31 ♘d6 1-0 (Chigorin-Teichmann, Hastings 1895).

Deep positional play, more typical of the mid-20th century! Chigorin demonstrated all the basic ideas of the set-up with the X-ray bishop at g2 and symmetrical pawns on e4 and e5: restriction of the knight at c6 by c2-c3, manoeuvre of the knight to c4, advance of the a- and b-pawns, exploitation of the d5- and f5-squares, the gradual suffocation of the opponent... This was the style of the future! Many decades later the King's Indian Attack became fashionable – incidentally, it was successfully employed by Fischer: against Ivkov (Santa Monica 1966), Durao (Havana Olympiad 1966), Miagmarsuren (Sousse interzonal 1967), Panno (Buenos Aires 1970) and so on.

I should add that after 2...♘c6 there is also 3 f4!? (3 ♘c3 e5 is equal, Chigorin-Lasker, London 1899) 3...♘d4 (3...♘ge7 4 ♘f3 d5 5 e5... 1-0 Chigorin-Gunsberg, Monte Carlo 1902) 4 ♕d3 c5 5 ♘f3 ♘c6 (5...♘xf3+ is better) 6 ♕e2! ♗e7 7 ♘c3 d5 8 d3 ♘f6 9 g3 – in this way Mikhail Ivanovich crushed the young Rubinstein (Third Russian Championship, Kiev 1903).

3 g3

The second game went 3 ♘c3?! ♘c6 4 ♘f3 a6 5 g3 ♘d4 6 ♕d3 ♕b6 7 ♗g2 ♘e7 8 ♘xd4 cxd4 9 ♘e2 ♘c6 10 c3 dxc3! and 11...♗c5 with an excellent game for Black, but... he got mated! Or 3 f4 ♘c6 4 d3 ♗e7 (4...♘ge7!?) 5 ♘f3 d5 6 ♘c3 ♘f6 with equality (Chigorin-Tarrasch, Ostend 1905).

3...♘c6 4 ♗g2 (in the fourth game Chigorin began with 4 ♘f3) **4...♗e7**

In the sixth game Black equalised by 4...♘d4 5 ♕d3 (5 ♕d1 d5) 5...♗e7 6 ♘c3 ♗f6 7 ♘b5 ♘xb5 8 ♕xb5 ♕b6! 9 ♕e2 d6 10 ♘f3 ♗d7, but on this occasion Tarrasch 'did not want to repeat the same moves, but to take a new course as soon as possible.'

According to Botvinnik, also good is 4...♘ge7 5 ♘c3 g6 6 d3 ♗g7, and 'the subsequently unavoidable ...d7-d5 enables Black to carry out a plan, which in the English Opening is usually chosen by White,' and, moreover, 'the move ♕e2 may prove inappropriate.'

5 ♘c3?!

Blocking the c-pawn – at that time the correct ways were only just beginning to be probed. Today everyone knows that more energetic is 5 ♘f3 d5 6 d3 ♘f6 7 0-0 0-0 (7...b6?! 8 e5 ♘d7 9 c4!) 8 ♖e1 or 8 e5 ♘e8 (8...♘d7 9 c4!) 9 c4 ♘c7 10 ♗f4 (Tal-Debarnot, Las Palmas 1977).

But after 8 ♘c3 a *tabiya* of the Chigorin Variation again arises, for example: 8...d4 (in the fourth game Tarrasch played 8...a6, while Schiffers tried both 8...♘d4 9 ♕d1 dxe4 10 dxe4 ♕b6, and 8...dxe4 9 dxe4 e5) 9 ♘d1 e5 10 ♘e1! ♕b6 11 ♔h1 ♗g4 12 f3 ♗d7 13 f4! ♖ac8 14 b3 (Chigorin-Schiffers, St Petersburg match 1895). A double-edged position in the spirit of the modern King's Indian was reached (an analogy suggests itself with the well-known game Taimanov-Fischer, Vancouver 3rd matchgame 1971).

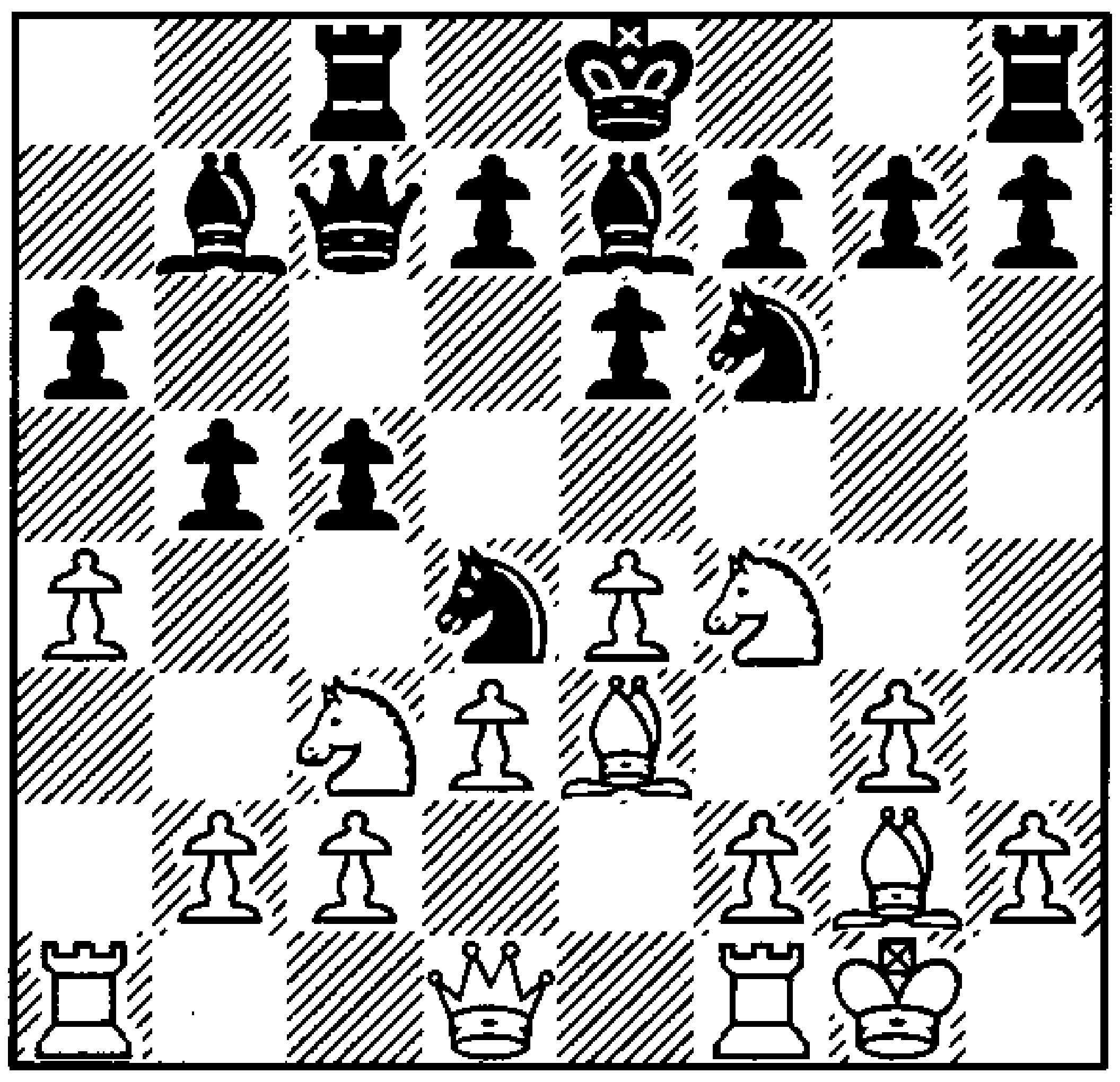
5...♕c7

'The immediate 5...♘f6? is impossible in view of 6 e5, but 5...♘d4 is stronger.' (Tarrasch) Then 6 ♕d1 ♘f6 7 d3 and ♘ce2 was possible, with an unclear game.

6 ♘h3!? a6 7 ♘f4 (preventing ...d7-d5 for a long time) **7...♘d4 8 ♕d1**

If 8 ♕d3?! Black was intending 8...♗f6 with the threat of ...c5-c4.

8...♘f6 9 d3 b5 10 0-0 ♗b7 11 ♗e3 (but not 11 e5?! on account of 11...♗xg2 12 exf6 ♗f3! 13 fxg7 ♖g8) **11...♖c8 12 a4**



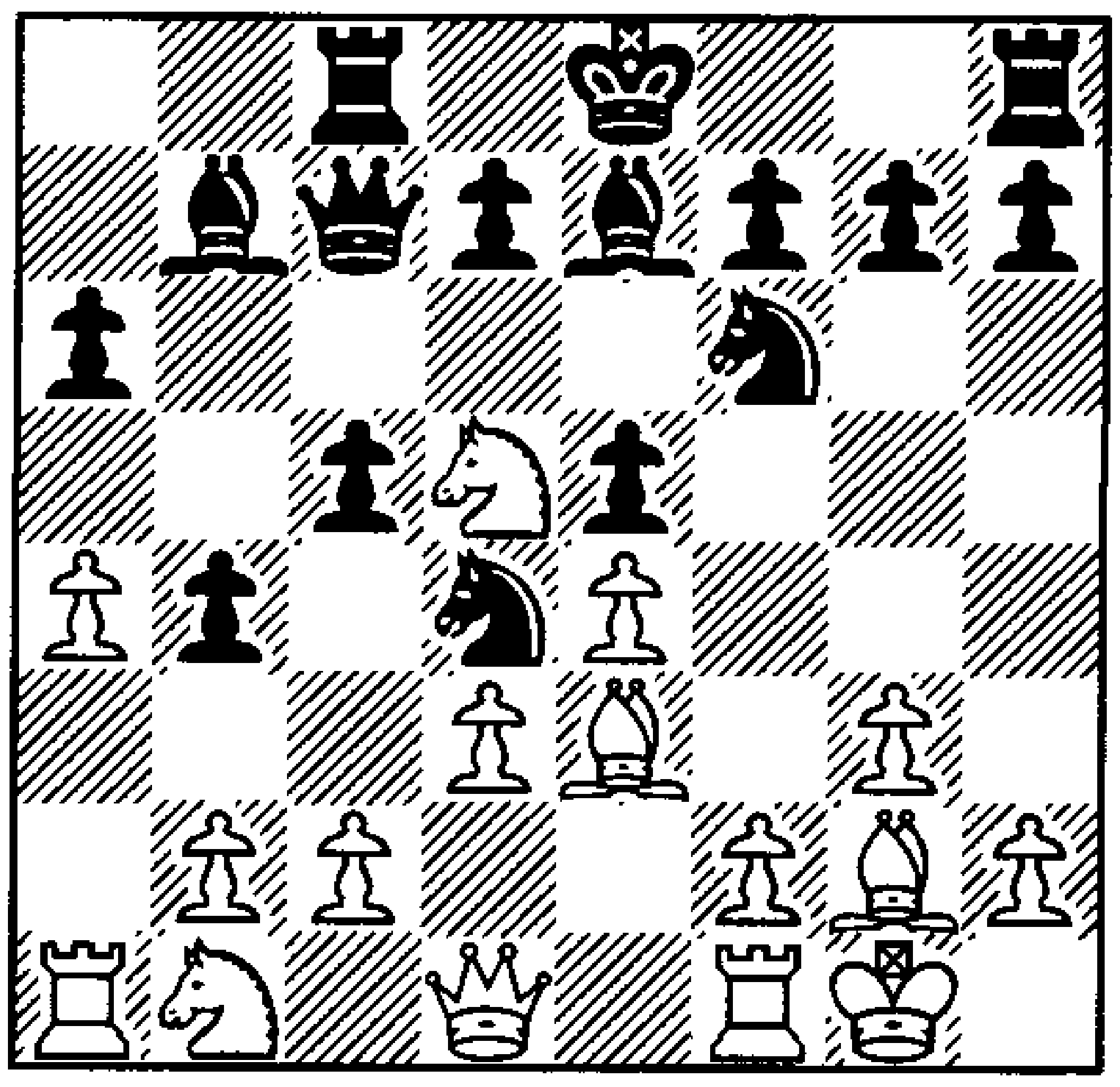
12...b4

'The first mistake, but one with serious consequences – the surrender of the c4-square. Correct was 12...♕b6 with a reasonable game.' (Tarrasch) However, in this case Chigorin could have developed his initiative by 13 axb5 axb5 14 e5 ♗xg2 15 ♘xg2 ♘g8 (15...♘d5?! 16 ♘xd5 exd5 17 ♗xd4 cxd4 18 ♘f4) 16 b4! (16 ♘e4 d5 17 exd6 ♗xd6 18 c3 ♘f5 19 b4 ♘xe3 20 fxe3 is unclear) 16...cxb4 17 ♕g4 etc.

13 ♘b1! e5?!

'The second and decisive mistake. I thought that the knight could not go to d5, since after the exchange on d5 the white pawn would be weak. This error cost me the game... After 13...0-0 14 ♘d2 ♖fd8 15 c3 bxc3 16 bxc3 ♘c6 17 d4 cxd4 18 cxd4 d5 or 14 c3 bxc3 15 bxc3 ♘c6 16 d4 cxd4 17 cxd4 ♘b4 Black would have had a quite acceptable game.' (Tarrasch)

14 ♘d5!



14...♗xd5?

'If 14...♘xd5 White would have gained the advantage by playing 15 exd5 ♕d6 16 c3 bxc3 17 bxc3 ♘f5 18 c4, when the bishop at b7 is condemned to a lengthy period of inaction. Even so, this would have been preferable.' (Tarrasch) Of course! Especially since moving the rook from c8 and playing ...d7-d6 and ...♗c8 would not take so very long. But in addition, after 15...♕d6 (the modern 15...b3!? 16 cxb3 0-0 17 ♘d2 is not altogether sufficient) 16 c3 more accurate is 16...♘f5! (not hurrying with 16...bxc3?!), for example: 17 c4 ♘xe3 18 fxe3 ♕h6 19 ♕f3 0-0 20 ♘d2 f5 with sharp play.

15 exd5 ♕d6?

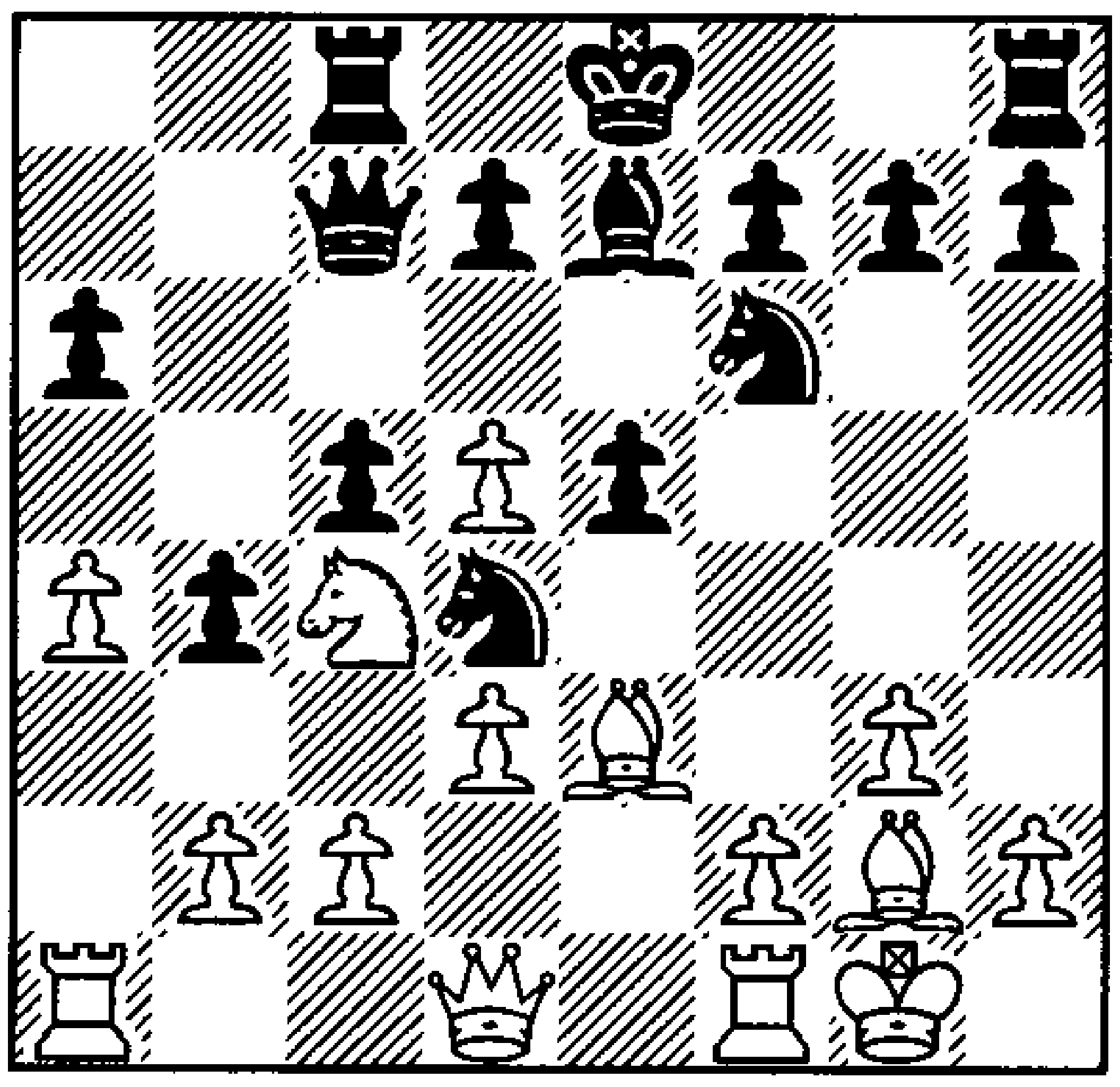
After the strategic mistake comes a tactical one: Tarrasch missed 'a subtle combination by the opponent', overlooking that it will be impossible to take on d5.

16 ♘d2! ♕c7

It transpires that after 16...♘xd5? 17 ♘c4 ♕e6 18 ♗xd4 cxd4 19 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 20 ♘b6 Black loses the exchange.

17 ♘c4

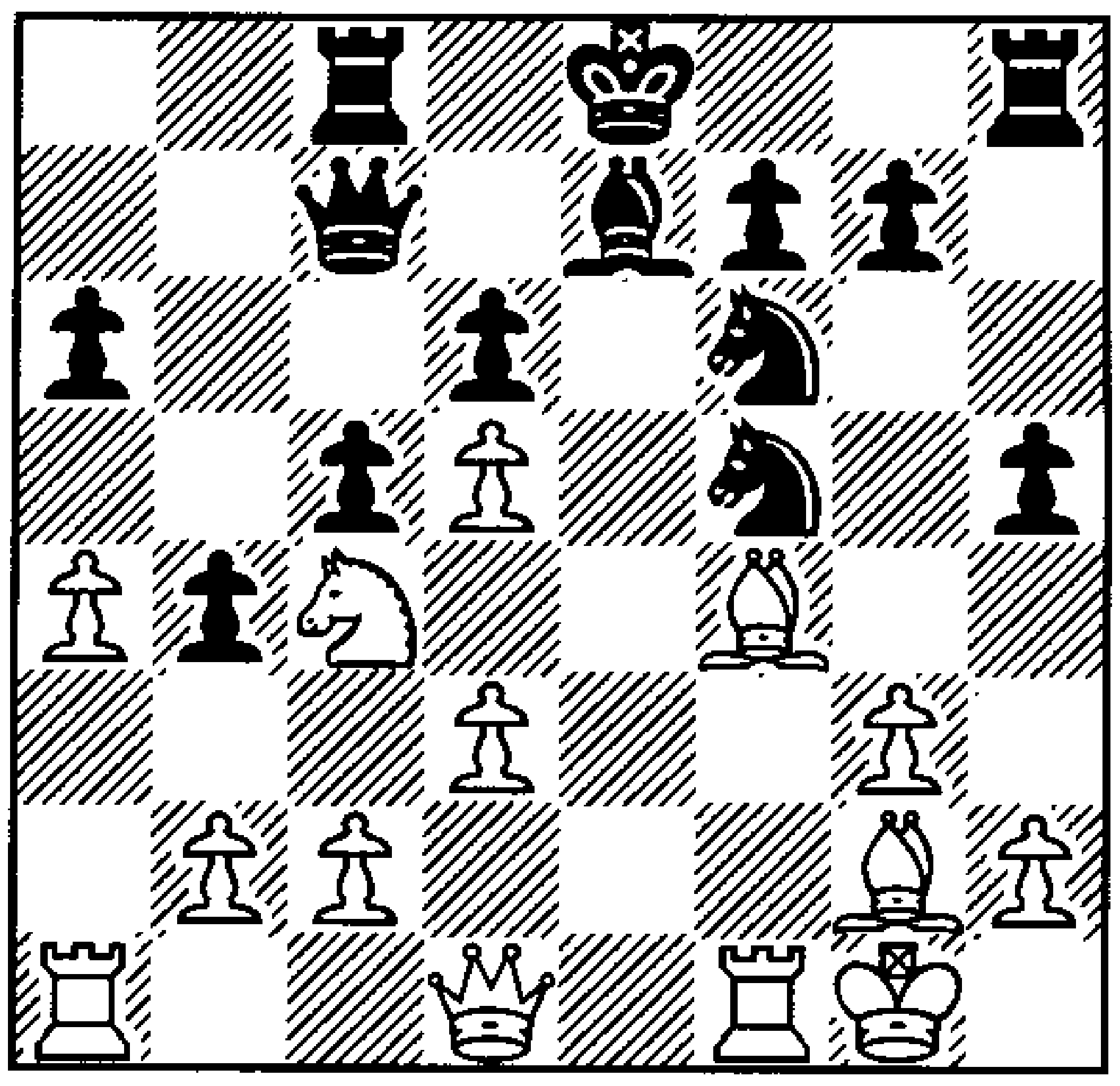
And now he has a strategically lost position.



17...h5

'Inwardly I was reconciled to defeat.' (Tarrasch). Indeed, the knight at d4 is in danger, and after 17...♘f5 (17...d6? 18 ♗h3 ♖d8 19 c3 traps the knight) 18 ♗d2 g6 19 g4! ♘g7 (not 19...♘h4? 20 d6 ♗xd6 21 ♗g5) 20 f4 Black's position is unenviable.

18 f4 ♘f5 19 ♗d2 exf4 20 ♗xf4 d6



21 ♕e2?!

Stronger was Tarrasch's suggestion of 21

♗h3! g6 22 ♗xf5 (I would add 22...gxf5 23 ♗g5 ♘xd5 24 ♖xf5) or 21...♘g4 22 ♗xg4 hxg4 23 ♕xg4 with a won game in each instance.

21...♖d8

'Better was 21...♘d4 22 ♕d2 ♖d8.' (Tarrasch). But after 23 ♖ae1 0-0 24 c3! Black is also lost, as is also the case after 22...h4 23 ♖ae1 ♔d8 24 c3.

22 ♖ae1 ♔f8

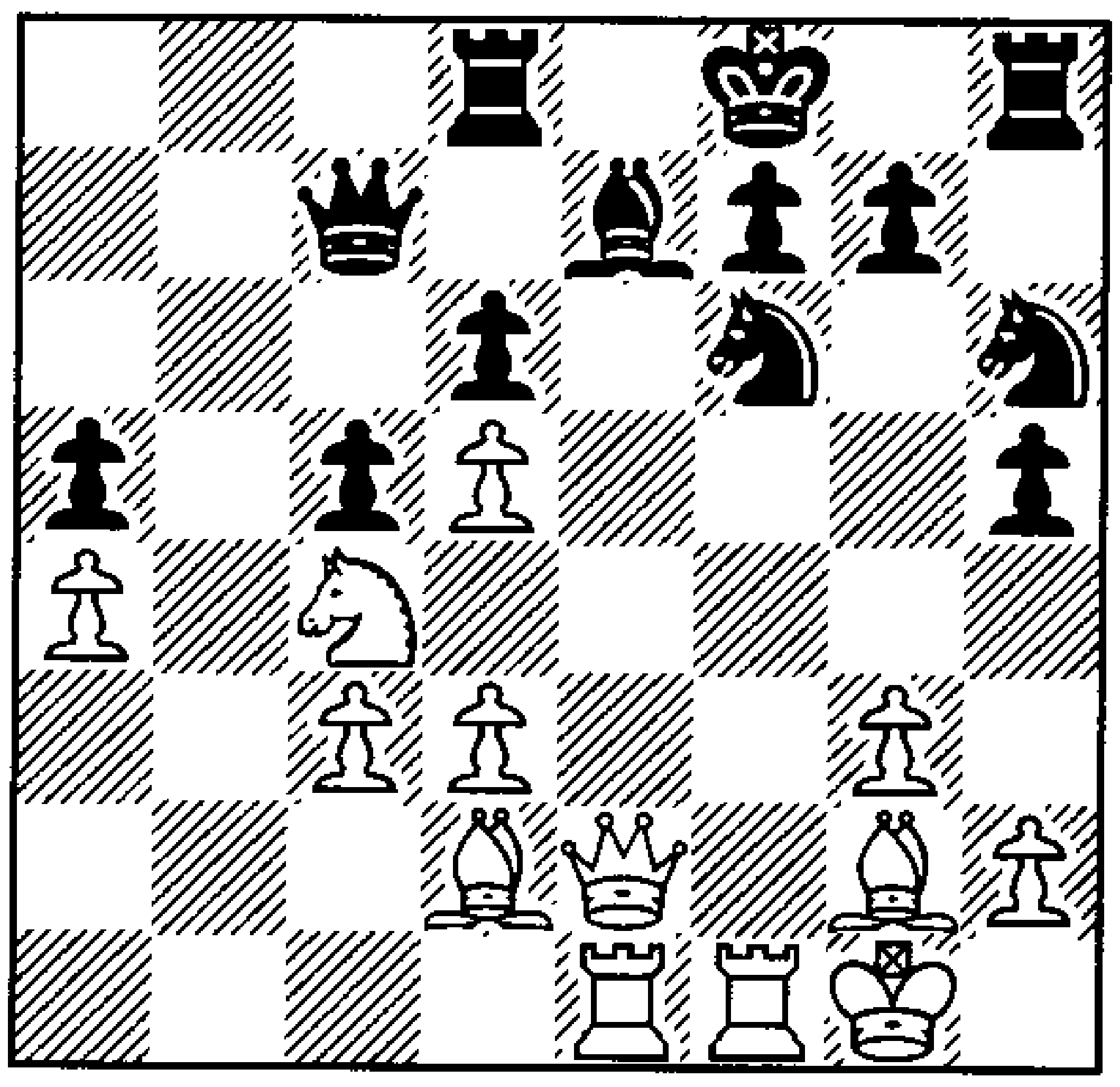
Black can hardly contemplate 22...0-0 23 ♗h3 ♘g4 24 ♗xg4 hxg4 25 ♕xg4.

23 c3 a5?!

'Had I not lost heart a few moves earlier, I would now have played 23...bxc3 24 bxc3 ♖e8.' (Tarrasch) Although here too it is all sufficiently clear: 25 ♕f3 g6 26 ♖b1 ♔g7 27 ♖b6.

24 ♗d2 bxc3 25 bxc3 ♘h6

Or 25...g6 26 ♗h3!



26 ♘xa5! ♘hg8

'To what base uses we may return, Horatio!' writes Tarrasch, wittily quoting Hamlet's words from the scene in the graveyard.

27 ♘c6 ♖e8 28 c4 ♕d7 29 ♗f4 h4 30 g4 ♘xg4

Despair: 30...♕xg4 31 ♕xg4 ♘xg4 32 ♘xe7 ♖xe7 33 ♗xd6 is hopeless.

31 ♗h3 ♘8f6 32 ♗g5 ♖h5 33 ♗xf6 gxf6 34 ♕xg4! 1-0

34...♖g5 35 ♕xg5!

A good illustration of Chigorin's original, non-routine style. It was of particular value that his opponent was one of the strongest players in the world, an excellent tactician who had absorbed Steinitz's ideas and sensed the nuances of positional play. However, even he was unable to counter Chigorin's originality! This once again confirms the scale of the talent that Tarrasch ran into in this match...

However, the very next day the Doctor was able to win one back, and he again took the lead.

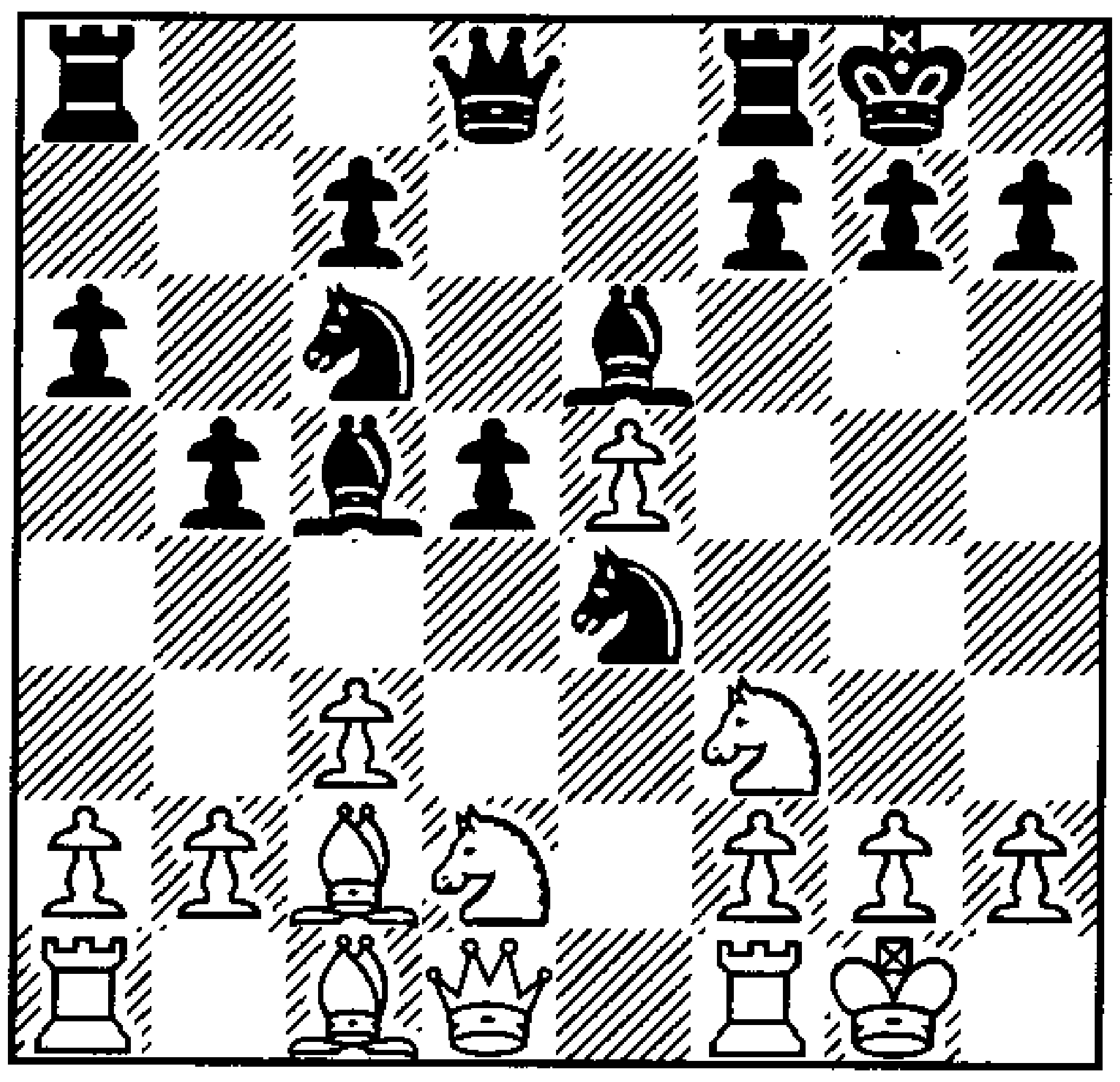
Game 28

S.Tarrasch-M.Chigorin

Match, St Petersburg 1893, 9th game

Ruy Lopez C82

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♘xe4 6 d4 b5 7 ♗b3 d5 8 dxe5 ♗e6 9 c3 ♗c5 (9...♗e7 – *Game No.65*) **10 ♘bd2 0-0 11 ♗c2**



One of the *tabiyas* of the Open Variation of the Ruy Lopez.

11...♘xd2?!

An old continuation, unpopular nowadays on account of its passivity. In the 20th century they played both 11...♘xf2 (Smyslov-Botvinnik, Moscow Championship 1943/44) and 11...f5 (Smyslov-Reshevsky, USSR-USA radio match 1945), and since the time of the Fischer-Larsen game (Santa Monica 1966) 11...♗f5! has been in fashion – here one immediately recalls the match duels Karpov-

Korchnoi (1978, 1981) and Karpov's win over Yusupov (50th USSR Championship, Moscow 1983). We will examine these important games in the second and third volumes in this series.

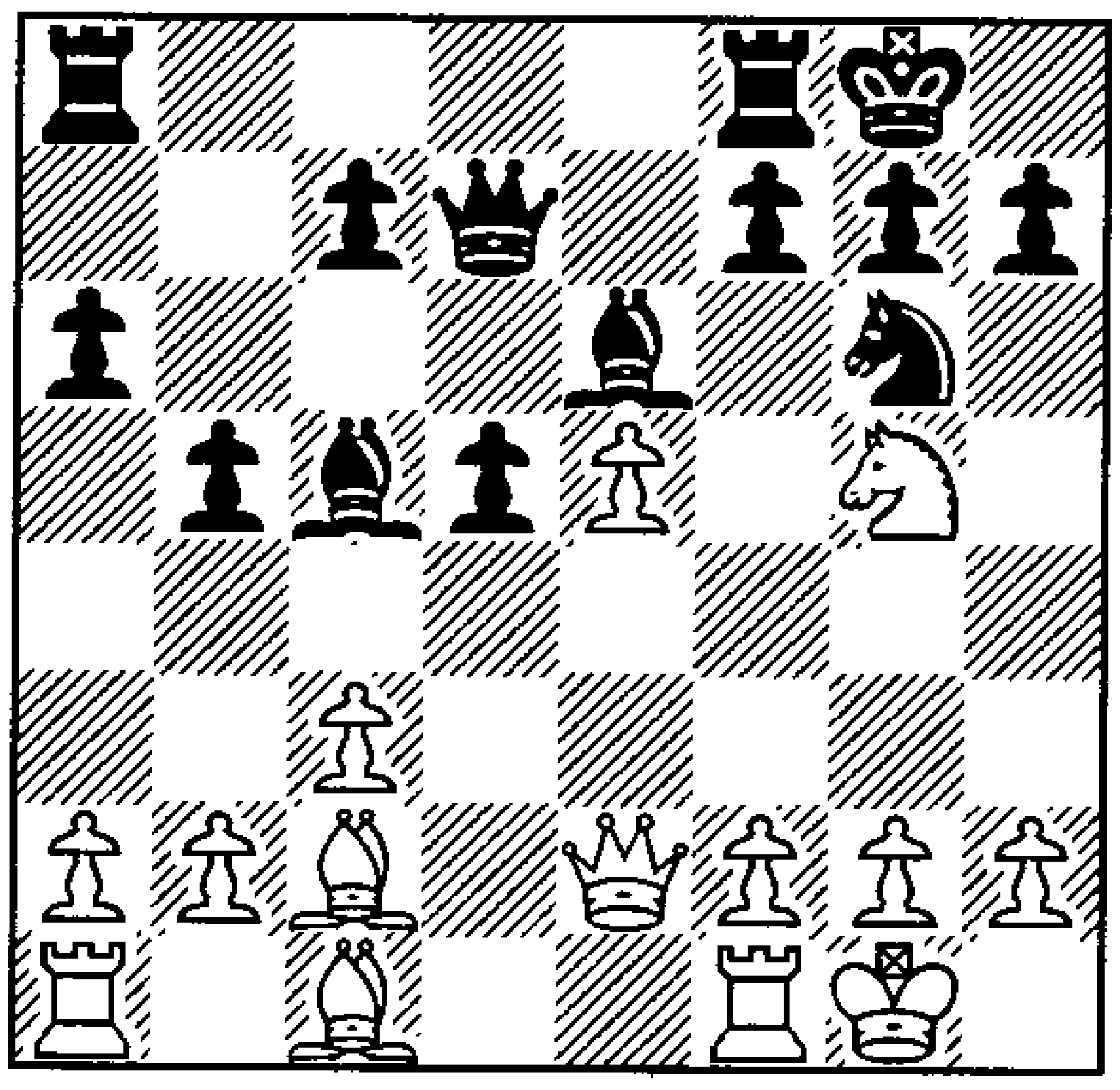
12 ♕xd2! (with the threat of ♕d3) **12...♘e7**

The main move is 12...f6 (*Game No.66*), but in games by Tarrasch, Schlechter, Maróczy and Bernstein 12...♖e8 also occurred, when Janowski played and Keres later recommended 13 ♕f4!?

13 ♘g5?!

'A tempting but premature attempt to attack. 13 ♘d4 is more solid.' (Tarrasch) Also interesting is 13 ♕g5!? ♘g6 14 ♕h5 ♗e7 15 ♘d4 (Mason), while the main line is 13 b4 ♗b6 14 ♘g5 ♗f5 15 ♗xf5 ♘xf5 16 ♕d3 g6 17 ♕h3! with the initiative (if 17 e6!? f6 18 ♘f7 ♕e7 19 ♕xd5 ♖fe8 20 ♖e1 ♘g7 21 ♘h6+ Black must reply 21...♔f8, but not 21...♔h8? 22 ♗b2! ♘xe6 23 c4! ♖ad8 24 ♖xe6! Smyslov-Ragozin, 13th USSR Championship, Moscow 1944).

13...♘g6 14 ♕e2 (now 15 ♕h5 h6 16 ♘xe6 is threatened) **14...♕d7!**



15 ♗e3

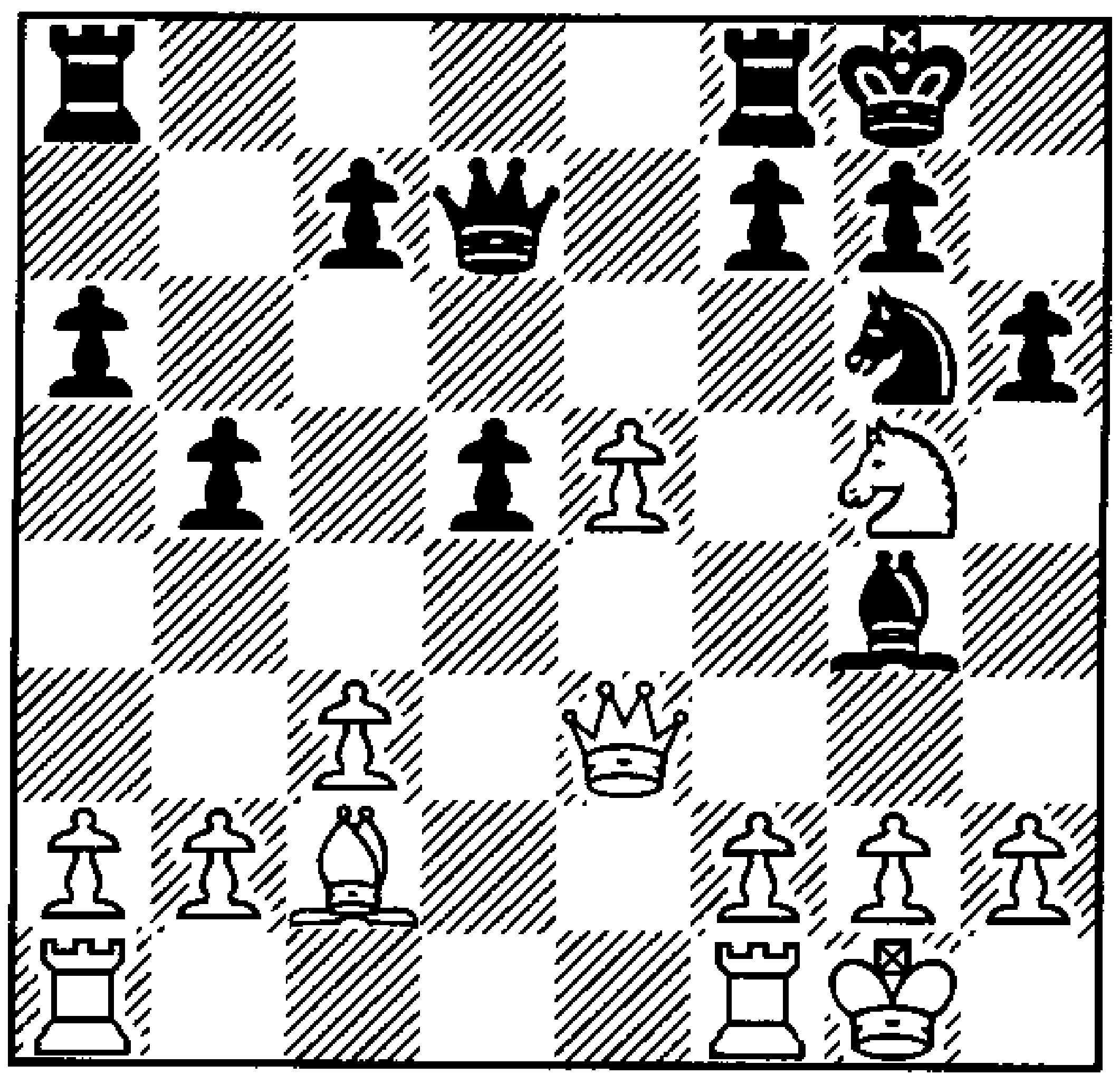
'After 15 ♕h5?! h6 16 ♘xe6 (or 16 ♘xf7 ♗xf7! 17 ♗xg6 ♗xg6 18 ♕xg6 ♖xf2!) 16...♕xe6 White would have ended up in an inferior position due to difficulties with the defence of his e5-pawn and the pressure on f2, for example: 17 ♗f5 ♕e7! 18 ♗xg6 fxg6 19 ♕xg6 ♖xf2! or 18 e6 ♘h4 19 exf7+ ♖xf7 20 ♗d3 ♖xf2! with a winning attack.' (Tarrasch)

15...♗g4! 16 ♕d3

White must already play cautiously: after 16 f3?! (16 ♘f3? ♗xf3!) 16...♗xe3+ 17 ♕xe3 ♗f5 18 ♗xf5 (18 ♗b3 h6) 18...♕xf5 19 f4 h6 his knight would have been out of play.

16...♗xe3 17 ♕xe3 h6

Forcing exchanges. If 17...♗f5!? Tarrasch recommended 18 ♗b3! h6 19 ♘f3 ♖ae8 20 ♕d4 c6 21 ♖fe1 with equal chances. Let us try continuing this variation: 21...♕c7! 22 a4 ♗e4 23 axb5 axb5 24 ♖a7 ♕b8 25 ♘d2 ♖xe5 26 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 27 ♖xe4 dxe4 28 ♕e3 with sufficient compensation for the pawn.



18 e6! (a spectacular breakthrough, leading to... complete equality) **18...fxe6**

Of course, not 18...♗xe6? 19 ♘xe6 ♖fe8 20 ♘c5.

19 ♘xe6

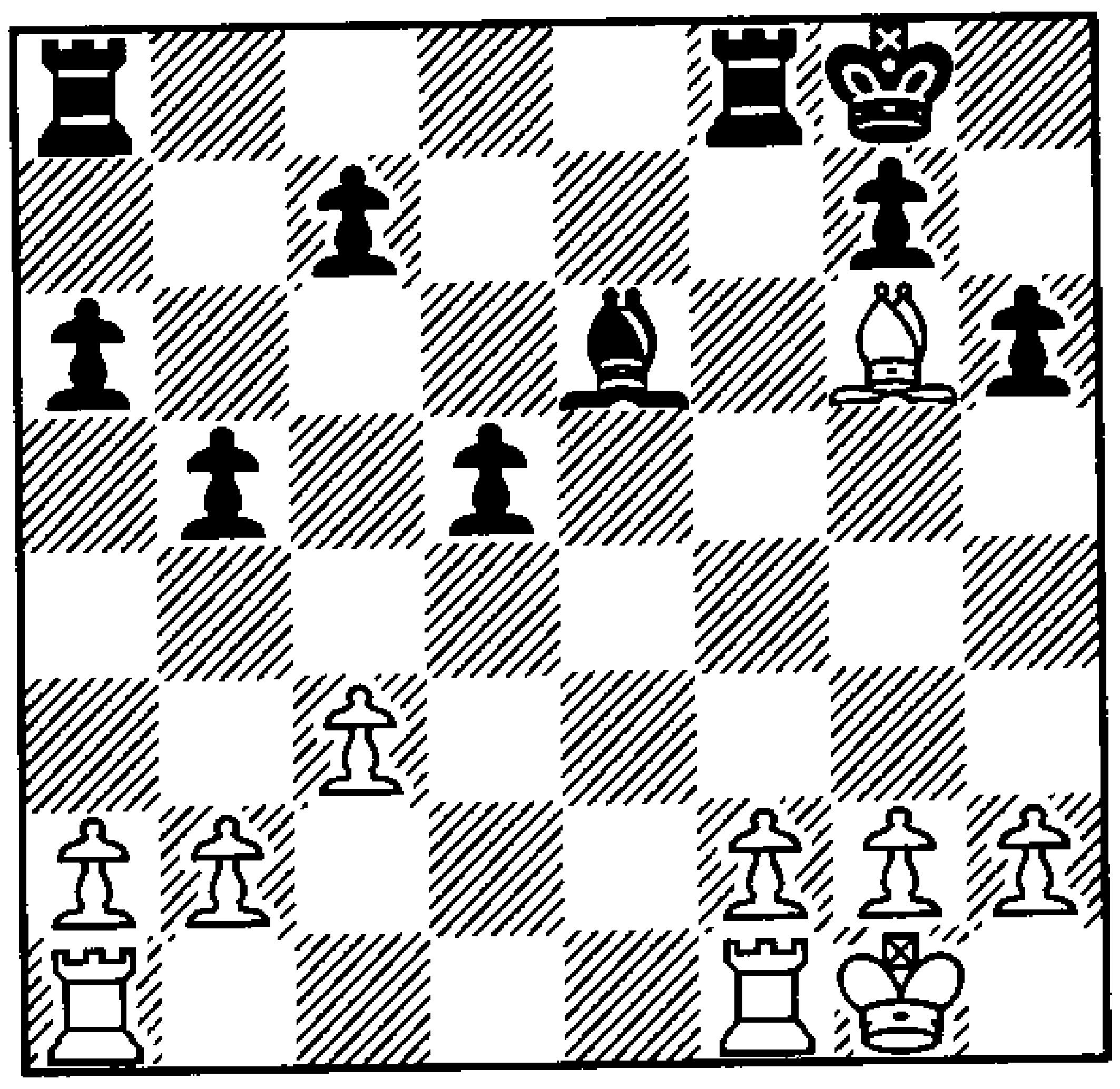
Tarrasch judged 19 ♗xg6 hxg5 20 ♕xg5 ♗f5 21 ♗xf5?! ♖xf5 to be in favour of Black, but more accurate is 21 ♖ae1! ♖f6 22 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 23 ♕g3 with a level game.

19...♕xe6

19...♖fe8?! 20 ♘c5 ♖xe3 21 ♘xd7 ♖e7! (21...♖e2? 22 ♗d1) 22 ♘c5 favours White.

20 ♕xe6+ ♗xe6 21 ♗xg6

The endgame is almost dead drawn, and Tarrasch offered a draw. But Chigorin, with a pawn majority on the queenside and the chance of being the first to create a passed pawn, declined...



21...c5 22 ♖fe1 ♖f6 23 ♗h5 ♖d8 24 ♖e5! (preventing ...d5-d4) **24...♔f8**

'Better was 24...g6!, then ...♗f7 and ...♖fd6.' (Tarrasch) Black may stand a trifle better.

25 ♖ae1 ♖d6?! (25...♗f7!) **26 f4! g6 27 ♗xg6 ♖xg6 28 f5 ♖f6?**

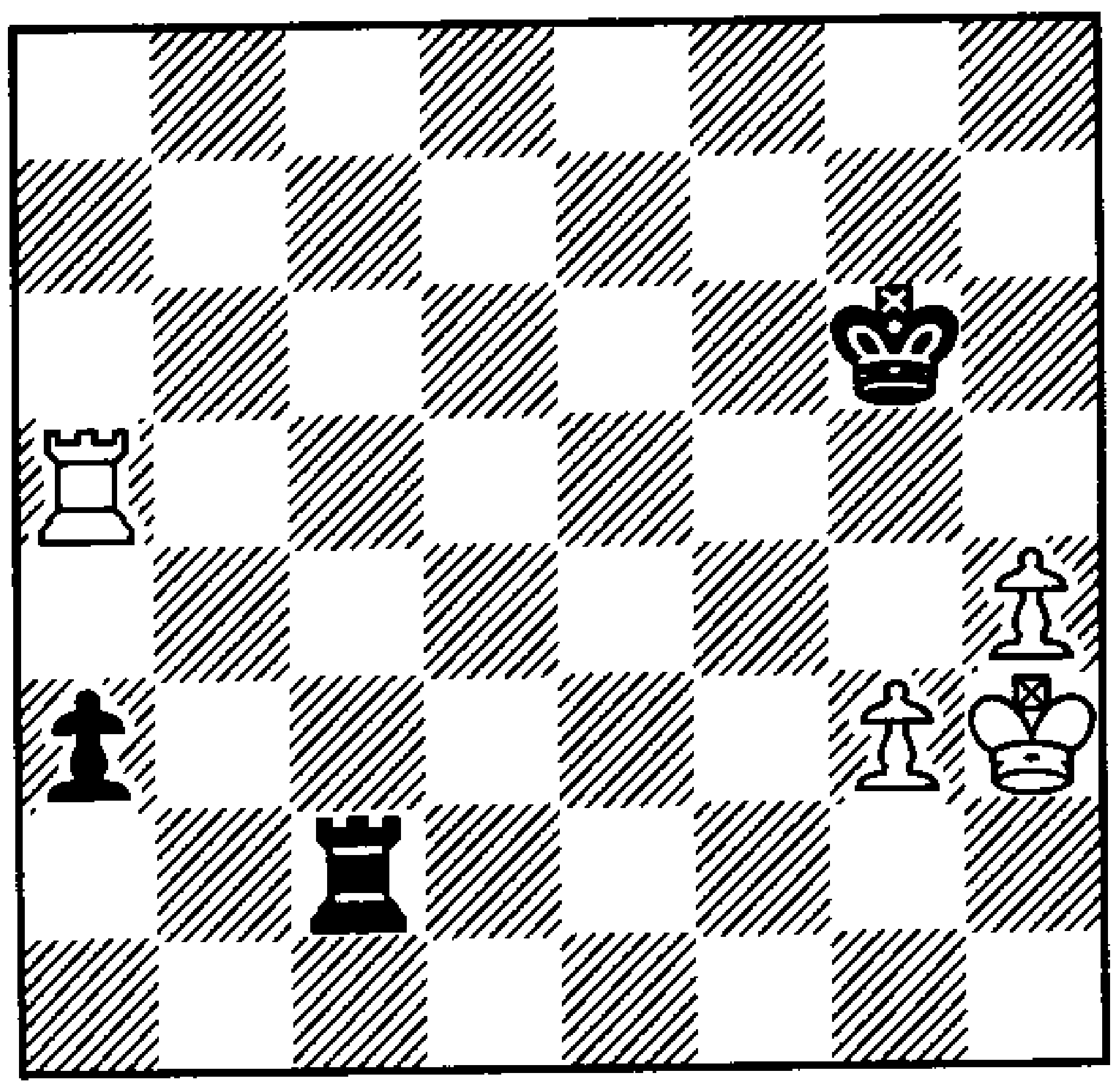
Much simpler was 28...♗xf5 29 ♖xf5+ ♖gf6 with a level game.

29 fxe6 ♔e7 30 ♖d1 ♖fxe6 31 ♖dxd5 ♖xd5 32 ♖xd5 ♖e2 33 ♖xc5 ♖xb2 34 ♖c6

'Although White has won a pawn, Black retains drawing chances, as usually happens in rook endings. 34 a4 bxa4 35 ♖a5 ♖c2 36 ♖xa4 ♖xc3 37 ♖xa6 h5 38 ♖a5 h4 39 ♖a4 h3 would have led to a draw.' (Tarrasch)

34...♖xa2 35 ♖xh6 a5 36 h4 a4 37 ♖a6 ♖c2 38 ♖a5 ♔f6 39 ♖xb5 ♖xc3 40 ♔h2 ♔g6 41 ♖a5 a3 42 g3 ♖c2+ 43 ♔h3

The key moment of the game.



43...♖a2?

An astounding lapse! After all, Kling and Horwitz had published analyses of this endgame back in the mid-19th century, and the method of gaining a draw was well known: 43...a2! 44 h5+ ♔f6 45 g4 ♖c5! (this is quicker than Tarrasch's suggestion of 45...♖b2 46 ♔h4 ♖h2+ 47 ♔g3 ♖b2 48 ♖a6+ ♔g7 49 h6+ ♔f7 50 g5 ♖b6 51 ♖xa2 ♔g6) 46 ♖xa2 ♔g5 47 ♖a3 ♖b5 or 44 ♖a6+ ♔f5 45 h5 ♖c5! 46 ♖xa2 ♔g5 etc.

Incidentally, later it was Tarrasch who formulated the golden rule: a rook should stand behind a passed pawn! To the side of it, if absolutely necessary, but on no account in front of it... This may now be a common truth, and no competent player will play 43...♖a2, but someone had to be the first to express it! It is the creation of a code of such general rules that comprises Tarrasch's historic service, the real achievement of his life...

44 ♔g4 ♖a1 45 ♖a6+ ♔f7 46 ♔g5 a2 47 g4 (but not 47 h5? ♖g1) **47...♔e7 48 ♖a7+ ♔e8 49 h5 ♔f8 50 h6 ♖b1**

'Black nevertheless has to give up the pawn on account of the threat of 51 h7 ♖h1 52 ♔g6. The resulting ending of rook and two pawns against rook (the same as that won by Zukertort against Steinitz in London 1883) is rather difficult to play; in particular White has to guard against a premature h6-h7 in view of a possible stalemate.' (Tarrasch)

51 ♖xa2 ♔g8 52 ♖a8+ ♔h7 53 ♖a7+ ♔h8 54 ♖f7 ♖b5+ 55 ♔g6 ♖b6+ 56 ♖f6 ♖b8 57 g5 ♖a8 58 ♖f5

With the intention of ♔h5 and g5-g6.

58...♔g8 59 ♖d5!

Enviable accuracy! After 59 ♔h5 ♖a1 60 g6 ♖h1+ 61 ♔g5 ♖g1+ 62 ♔f6 ♔h8 63 g7+ (63 h7? ♖xg6+) 63...♔h7 64 ♔f7 ♖g2 things would have been far more difficult for White.

59...♖b8 60 ♔h5 ♖a8 61 g6 ♔h8 62 ♖f5

Threatening mate after h6-h7 and ♔h6.

62...♖g8 63 g7+ 1-0

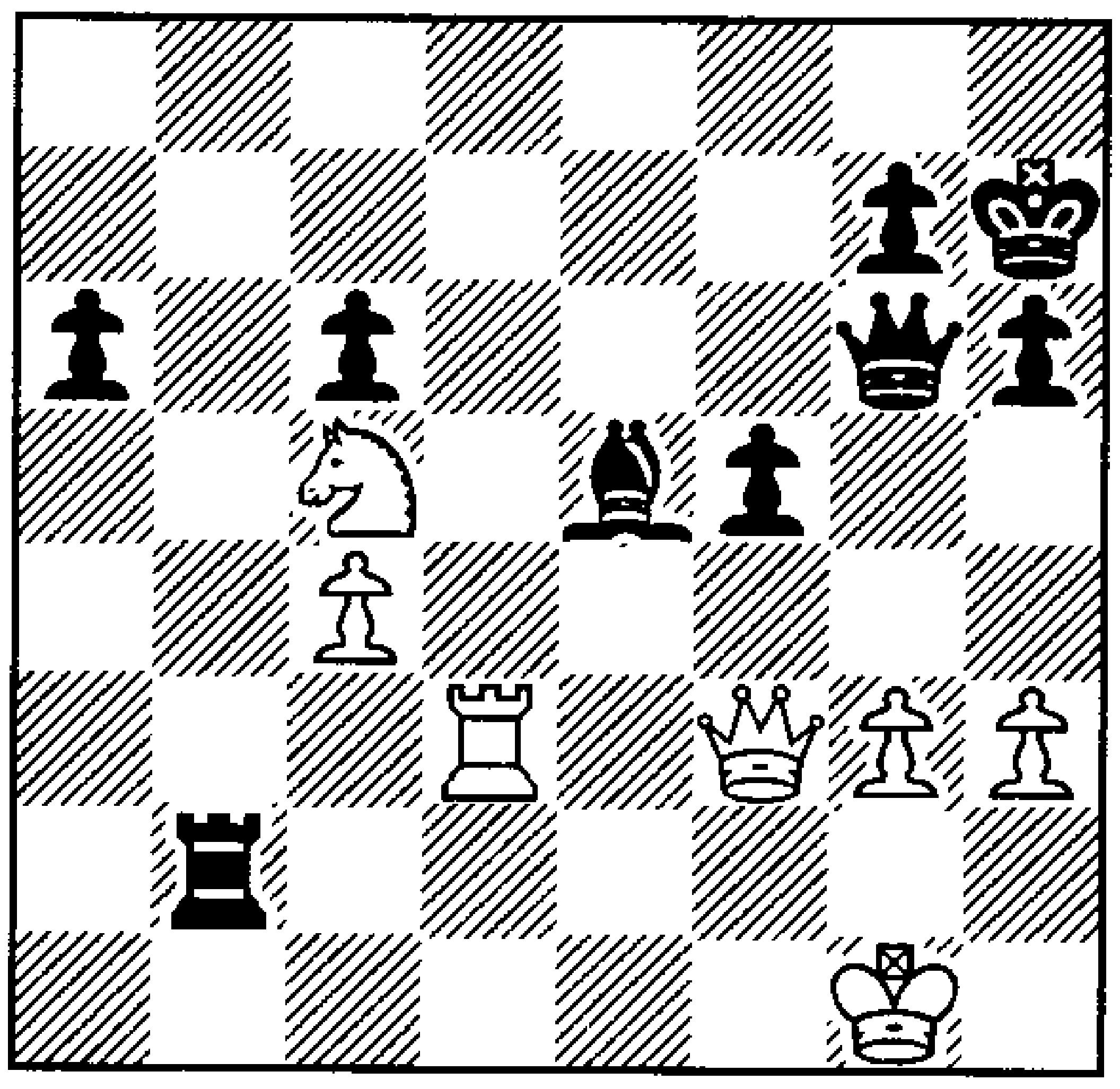
63...♔h7 64 ♖f8 ♖xf8 65 gxf8♗ or ♘ – the only way! The game lasted eight hours.

In the 10th game the first draw in the match was recorded, and in the 11th Mikhail Ivanovich suffered yet another terrible catastrophe.

Game 29

S.Tarrasch-M.Chigorin

Match, St Petersburg 1893, 11th game



51...a5?!

Immediately decisive was 51...♕g5! with the threats of 52...♗xg3 and 52...♕c1+ 53 ♖d1 ♕c2.

52 ♘d7 ♗c7??

A nightmare! 'After 52...♗d6 Black would have won this subtly planned and powerfully conducted game.' (Tarrasch)

53 ♘f8+ 1-0

The game lasted seven hours. To a considerable degree it was on account of this type of oversight that Chigorin succumbed to his mighty opponents...

After seventeen games Tarrasch was leading 8-5 and was just two steps away from the cherished goal. But here the incredible happened: the strict Doctor lost three times in a row! Later he explained this by the incredibly cordial reception that he was given in St Petersburg: 'The lengthy night-time vigils till three, four and even six in the morning affected by usual freshness and readiness for battle. The lavish libations, which were awkward for me to decline, also played their part...'

In the 18th game Chigorin won a famous rook endgame, to which analysts were returning even a whole century later.

Game 30

M.Chigorin-S.Tarrasch

Match, St Petersburg 1893, 18th game
French Defence C00

1 e4 e6 2 ♕e2 ♗e7 3 b3

'A clever move, directed against ...d7-d5.' (Tarrasch) Harmless is 3 ♘c3 d5 4 d3 ♘f6 5 g3 0-0 (or 5...b6 6 ♗g2 ♗b7 7 ♘h3 dxe4 8 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 9 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 10 ♕xe4 ♕d5 Chigorin-Maróczy, Nuremberg 1896) 6 ♗g2 ♘c6 7 ♘f3 e5 (10th game).

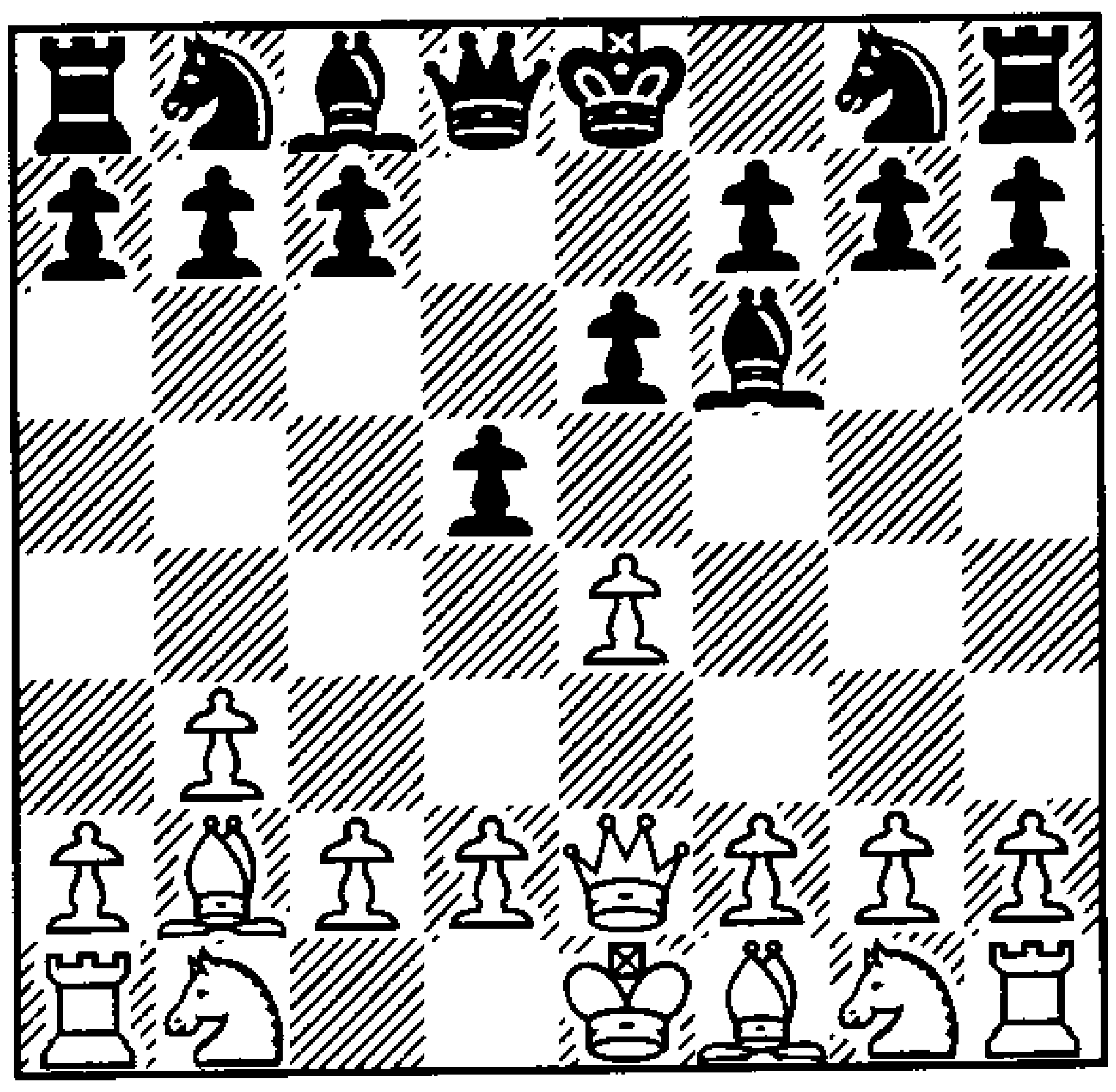
But another 'King's Indian trick' is also of interest: 3 g3 d5 4 d3 ♘f6 (4....b6!? Chigorin-Marco, Berlin 1897) 5 ♗g2 0-0 6 ♘h3!? c5 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 c3! dxe4?! (8...b6! equalises) 9 dxe4 e5 10 ♘a3 h6 11 ♘c2 ♗e6 12 f3 ♕d7 13 ♘f2 ♖ad8 14 ♘e3 g5? 15 ♔h1 ♔h7 16 ♕c2! ♔h8 17 ♘f5 ♗xf5 18 exf5 ♖g8 19 g4 ♔g7 20 ♖e1 a6 21 ♗f1! ♖ge8 22 ♗d3 ♕c7 23 h4! ♖h8 24 ♔g2 gxh4?! 25 ♗e4 ♘d5 26 ♗xd5! ♖xd5 27 ♘e4 ♖hd8 28 ♖e2 ♕d7 29 f6+! ♗xf6 30 ♗xh6+ ♔xh6 31 ♘xf6 1-0 (Chigorin-Zinkl, Berlin 1897).

3...d5

More artificial is 3...♗f6 4 ♘c3 ♘c6 5 ♗b2 ♘ge7 6 f4 d6 7 ♘f3 ♘g6 8 g3 ♗d7 9 h4 h5 10 0-0-0 etc. (Chigorin-Schiffers, St Petersburg 2nd matchgame 1897).

4 ♗b2 ♗f6

'The normal 4...♘f6! allows the break-up of the kingside pawns – 5 exd5 exd5 (5...♕xd5?! 6 ♘c3) 6 ♗xf6 gxf6, but Black has excellent compensation for this in the form of his two bishops, the open g-file, and the weakening of the opponent's queenside by b2-b3 (*say, 7 ♘f3 ♘c6 8 d4 ♗g4 9 c3 ♕d7 with equal chances – G.K.*). And after 5 e5 the game has the usual "French" character and Black is alright.' (Tarrasch) For example: 5...♘fd7 6 g3 c5 7 ♗g2 ♘c6 8 f4 f5 9 ♘f3 0-0 10 h4 ♘b6 11 ♘c3 ♗d7 (Chigorin-Schiffers, St Petersburg 4th matchgame 1897). Against Alapin, Chigorin tried both 5 ♘c3 0-0 6 f4 (Monte Carlo 1901) and 6 ♘f3 (St Petersburg 1905), but also without success.

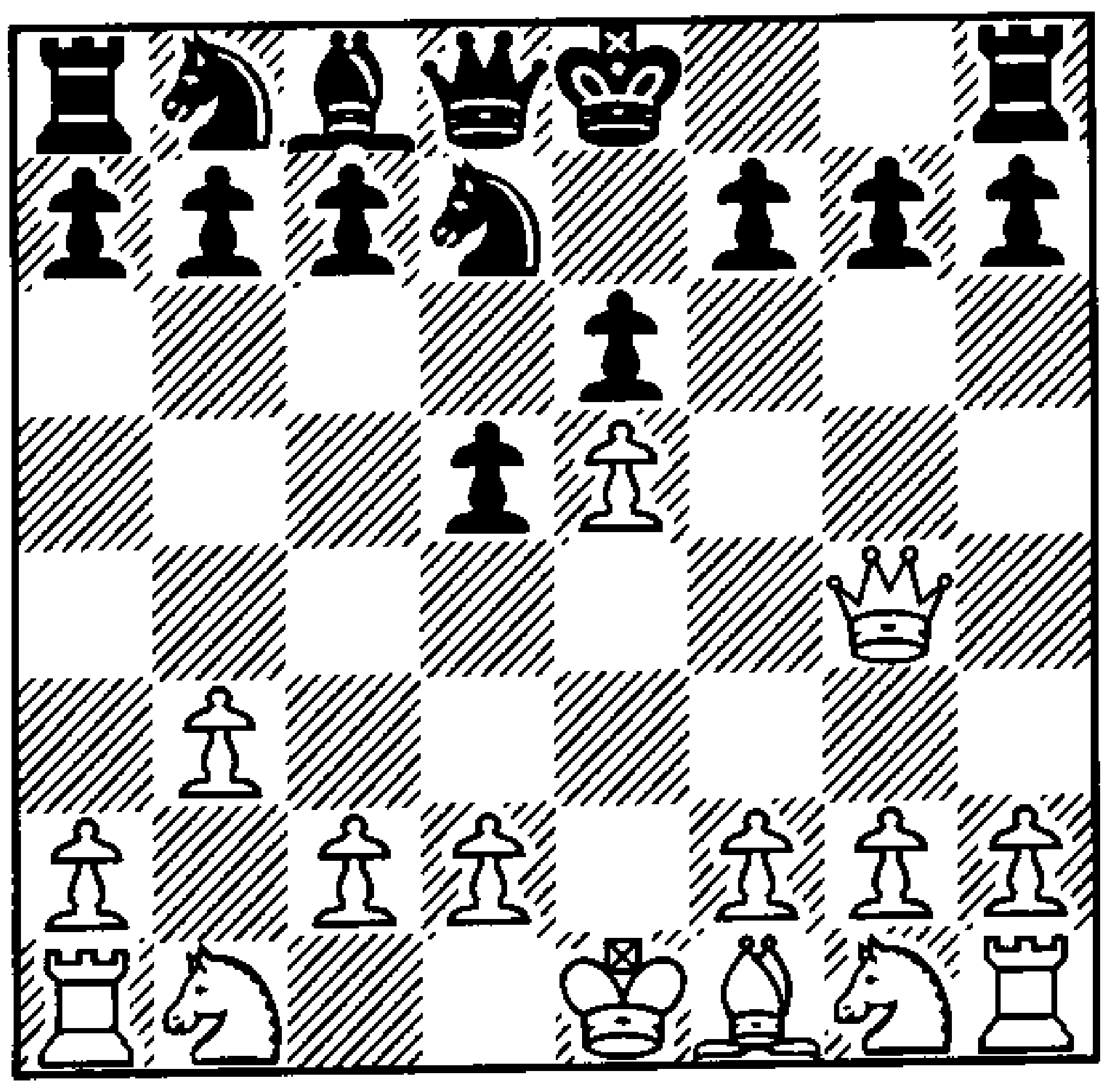


5 ♗xf6?!

White changes course, despairing of gaining any advantage after 5 e5 (5 ♘c3 dxe4 Chigorin-Burn, Vienna 1898) 5...♗e7 6 ♕g4 ♗f8 7 ♘f3 (7 ♘h3 c5 8 f4 ♘c6 9 a3 ♘h6 12th game) 7...c5 8 ♗b5+ (8 ♘c3!? Keres) 8...♗d7 9 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 10 ♘c3 ♘c6 11 0-0 ♘ge7 (14th game), all of which are equal.

5...♘xf6 6 e5 ♘fd7 7 ♕g4

'White needs to develop his bishop. He does not have time to fianchetto it: 7 f4 0-0 8 g3 f6 9 ♘f3 fxe5 10 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 11 fxe5 ♘c6 12 ♗g2 ♕g5!' (Vasyukov, Nikitin)



7...0-0

In the 20th game Tarrasch played 7...g6 – 'for amusement's sake, to see whether White would be able to exploit this weakening.' After 8 f4 ♘c6 (8...c5!?) 9 ♘c3 ♘b4 10 ♔d1 ♘c5 11 ♕e2 a6 12 a3 ♘c6 13 ♘f3 b6 14 d4 ♘d7 15 ♕e3 ♘e7 16 ♗d3 c5 Black began an offensive on the queenside and by the 26th move he had obtained an overwhelming position. But here... 'My thinking apparatus stopped functioning normally,' writes Tarrasch, 'and I let slip a deserved win.' And 30 moves later he also missed a draw...

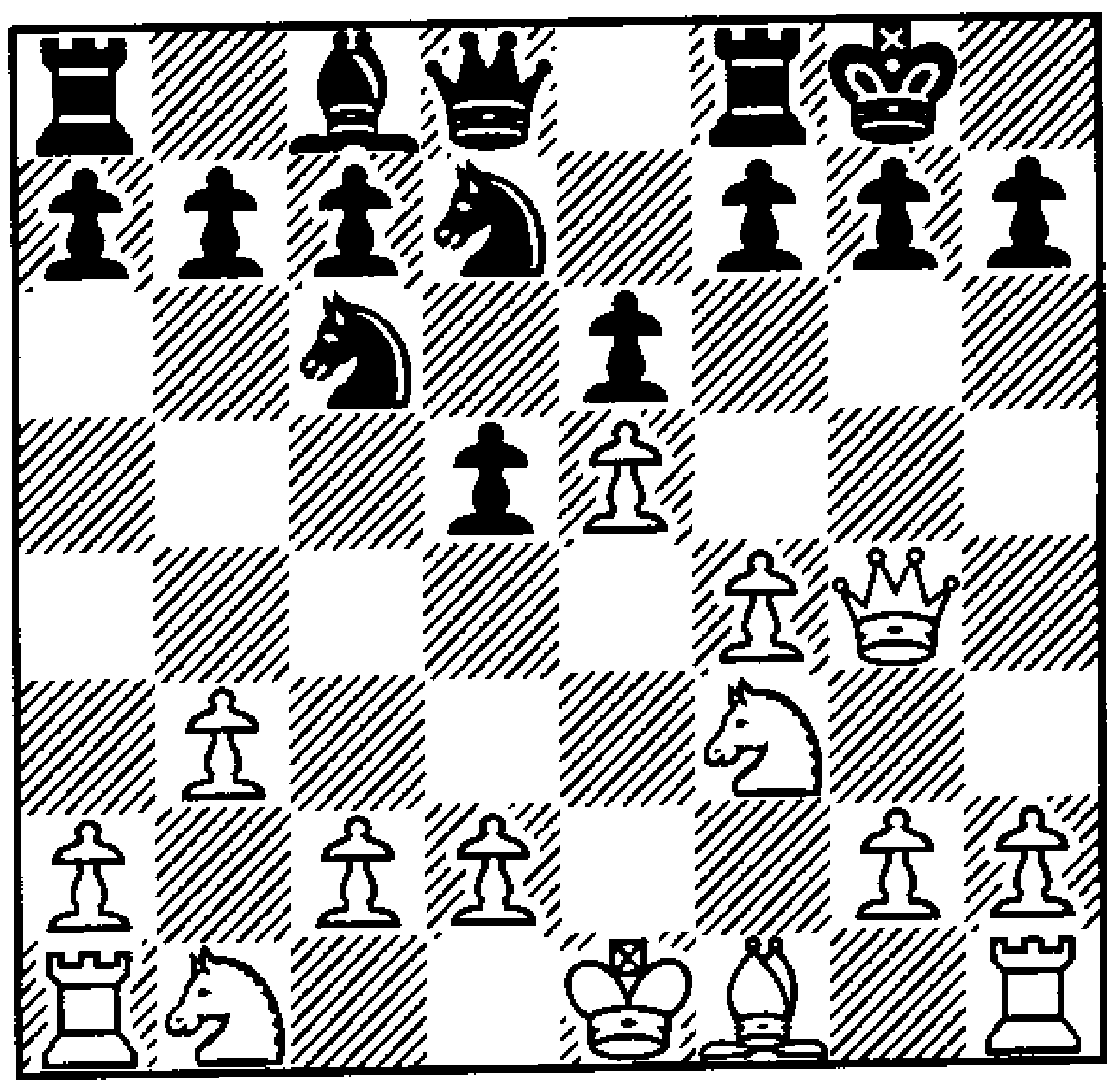
'The strongest move is 7...♘xe5, suggested by Heyde in his book about the match; it refutes Chigorin's entire favourite method of attack. After 8 ♕xg7 ♘g6 Black aims for the exchange of queens, which will give him the better game: 9 h4 ♕e7 10 h5 f6 or 9 ♗d3 f5 and ...♕e7.' (Tarrasch)

8 f4 ♘c6

'Nowadays every master would first play 8...c5.' (Botvinnik) But according to Tarrasch, 'the knight move is much stronger, since the knight immediately threatens an attack on the queenside.'

9 ♘f3

In the final, 22nd game, Mikhail Ivanovich 'corrected himself' with 9 c3, but after 9...d4! Black also gained the advantage (although he soon went wrong and lost in a titanic struggle). It is amusing that a theoretical duel in the match developed in a position where for White one already wants... simply to resign!



9...f5?!

'Missing the most appropriate moment for an attack – 9...♘b4!' (Tarrasch). And indeed, bad now are both 10 ♘a3?! f5 11 ♕g3 c5 12 c3 ♕a5 13 cxb4 ♕xa3 and 10 ♘d4?! c5 11 a3 ♕a5 12 c3 cxd4 13 cxb4 ♕c7 (Chigorin). Only the awkward 10 ♔d1 remains, when there can follow 10...c5 (Tarrasch considered 10...♘c5 and a possible ...♘e4) 11 c3 ♘c6 12 ♗d3 f5 13 ♕h3 ♘b6 (but not 13...c4? 14 ♘g5) with an excellent game for Black.

10 ♕h3 (threatening ♘g5) **10...♖e8 11 ♘c3**

11 g4!? is unclear (Tarrasch).

11...♘f8 12 ♗e2?!

'Typical of Chigorin: he prefers to avoid simplification, even at a high price. By playing 12 ♗b5 and, given the opportunity, ♗xc6, White would have insured himself against all dangers.' (Botvinnik) '12 g4 was still very strong.' (Tarrasch)

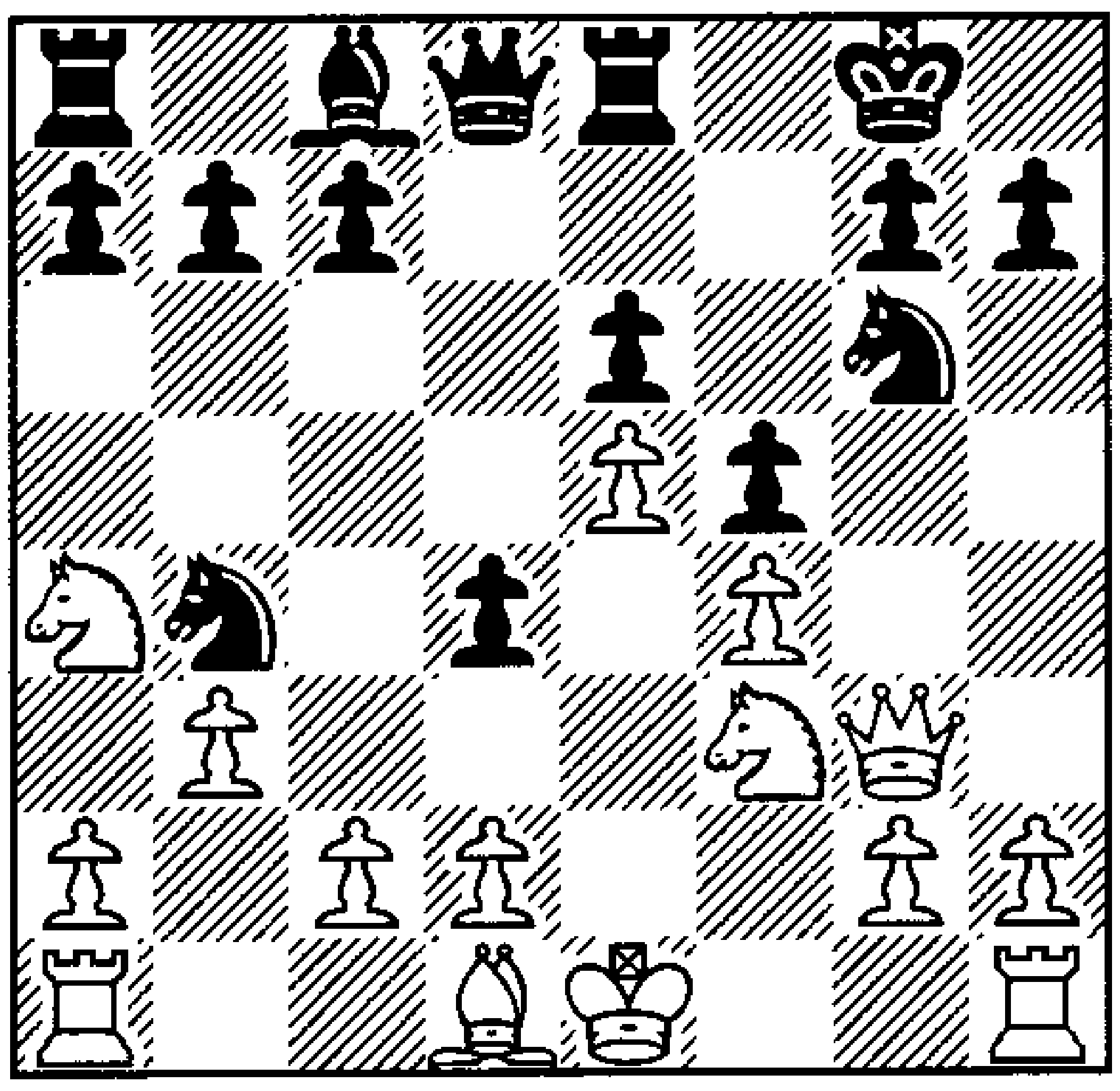
It is strange that no commentator considered the simple gain of space – 12 d4!? That is what I would play! For example: 12...♘g6 13 ♕g3 ♘b4 14 0-0-0 c5 15 h4 or 12...♘b4 13 0-0-0 c5 14 dxc5 ♕a5 15 ♔b2 ♕xc5 16 a3 ♘c6 17 g4 with double-edged play.

12...♘g6 13 ♕g3

'After 13 g3 the white queen would have been cut off from the centre and the c8-bishop would have developed dangerous activity on the c6-h1 diagonal.' (Tarrasch)

13...d4 14 ♘a4 ♘b4 15 ♗d1

Prophylaxis against ...d4-d3.



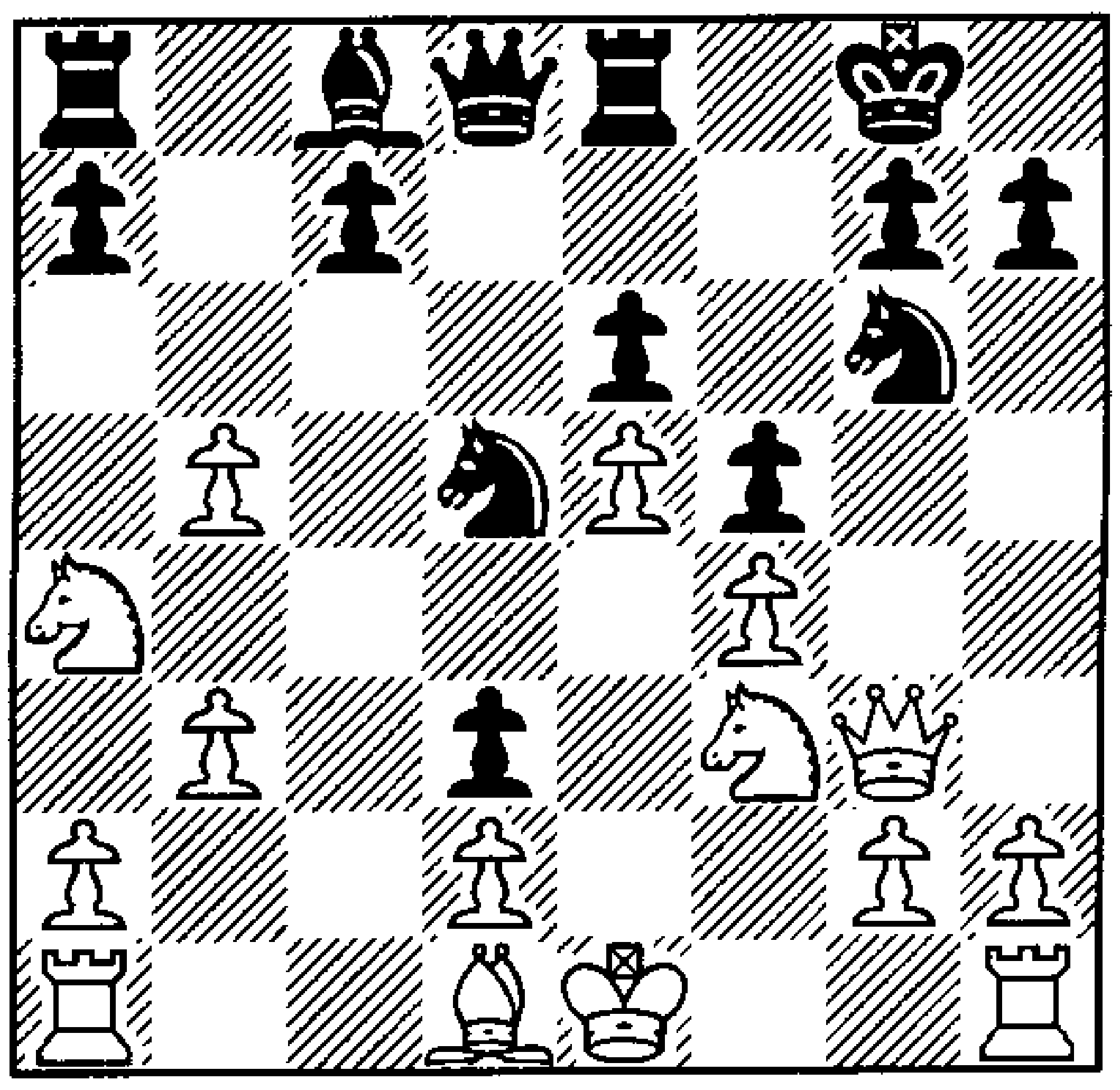
15...d3?!

'The original cause of Black's defeat. Correct was 15...b5 16 ♘b2 c5 17 0-0 ♗b7! with a clear advantage in the centre and on the queenside.' (Botvinnik) However, the position after 18 ♘g5 seems to me to be not altogether clear, and I would prefer Tarrasch's recommendation 15...♘d5! 16 ♘xd4 ♘dxf4 17 ♘f3 ♗d7 18 ♘c3 ♗c6 'with an excellent game for Black, since White cannot castle in view of ...♗xf3 and ...♕xd2 or ...♕d4+.'

16 c4 b5?!

'Rather a wild idea. By 16...♗d7 17 ♘c3 ♗c6 Black would have maintained a positional advantage and given the d3-pawn adequate support: 18 a3 ♘c2+ 19 ♗xc2 dxc2 and White is still unable to castle, or 18 0-0 a5 19 a3 ♘a6 and ...♘c5.' (Tarrasch) Apparently the Doctor very much wanted to punish the opponent for his artificial play, and for some reason he gave up a pawn, at the same time creating a 'hole' in his position at c6.

17 cxb5 ♘d5



18 ♘d4!

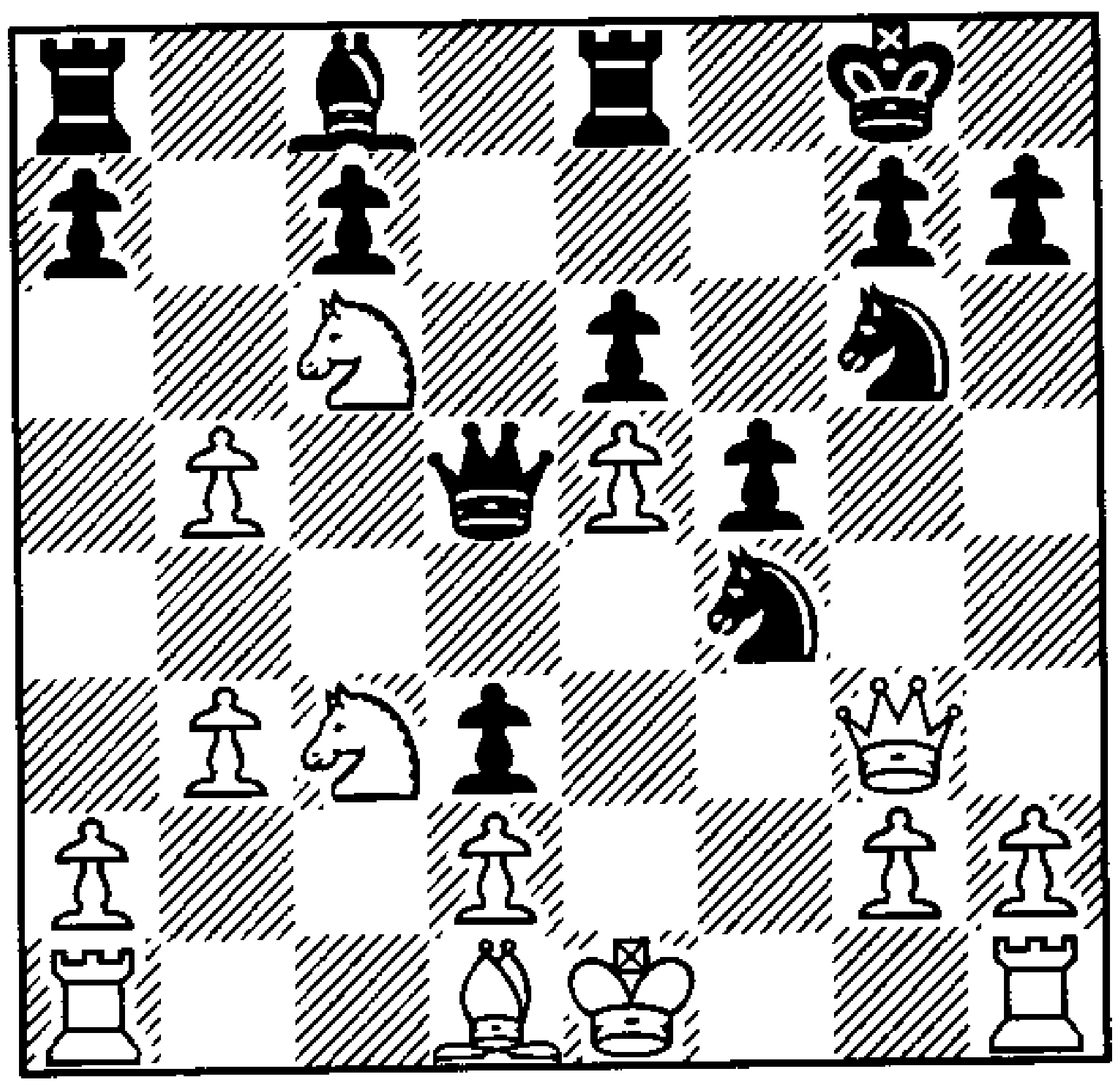
'An excellent move, which can hardly have been anticipated by Tarrasch. If immediately 18 0-0, then 18...♘dxf4.' (Botvinnik) True, here all is not clear after 19 ♘c5.

18...♘dxf4

Inferior is 18...♘gxf4?! 19 0-0! ♘g6 20 ♘c6 ♕h4 21 ♕xh4 ♘xh4 22 ♘c5.

19 ♘c6 ♕d5 20 ♘c3!

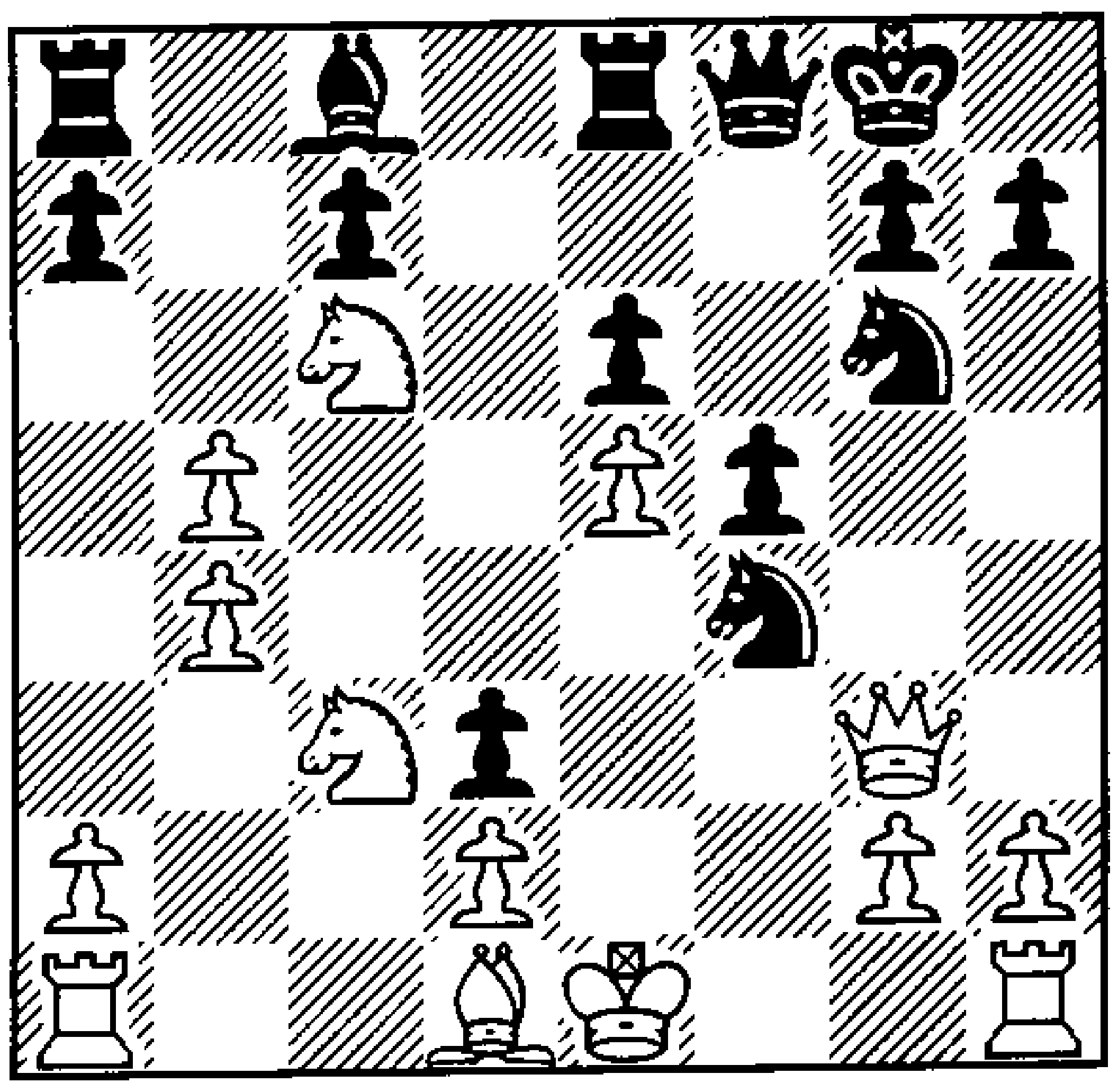
A not altogether obvious stroke. It would seem that from afar Tarrasch had calculated 20 ♗f3?! ♕xb5 with advantage to Black: 21 ♘e7+ ♖xe7 22 ♗xa8 ♕xe5+ or 21 ♘c3 ♕c5 22 b4 ♕b6 23 ♘e7+ ♖xe7 24 ♗xa8 c6 (24...♕xb4 will also do).



20...♕c5?

The losing move. '20...♕xg2! was essential – after 21 ♗f3 ♕xg3+ 22 hxg3 ♘d5 23 ♘xd5! (23 ♗xd5? exd5 24 ♘xd5 ♗b7! wins for Black) 23...exd5 24 ♗xd5+ ♗e6 the weakness of the e5-pawn would have promised Black an excellent game.' (Tarrasch) At any event, he would not have been worse: 25 ♗f3 a6 26 bxa6 ♖xa6 27 ♔f2 ♗d7 28 ♘b4 ♖a3 etc.

21 b4! ♕f8



22 0-0!

'After castling only on the 22nd move, White immediately wins the d3-pawn, since the knight at f4 is forced to move.' (Botvinnik)

22...♘e2+ (22...♘d5 23 ♗f3!) **23 ♘xe2 dxe2 24 ♗xe2 ♗d7 25 ♕c3**

The stage of converting the advantage now begins.

25...♗xc6 26 bxc6 ♔h8 27 d4

'The simplest winning plan was ♗a6-b7 and the capture of the a7-pawn with queen or rook (♖ab1-b3-a3). 27 ♗h5 was also very strong.' (Tarrasch)

27...♖ed8 28 ♗c4 ♕f7 29 ♖ad1?! ♘e7 30 b5 ♘d5 31 ♕f3?! (31 ♕b3 is more accurate) **31...♕e7 32 a3?!** (32 ♕b3!) **32...♘b6 33 ♕b3**

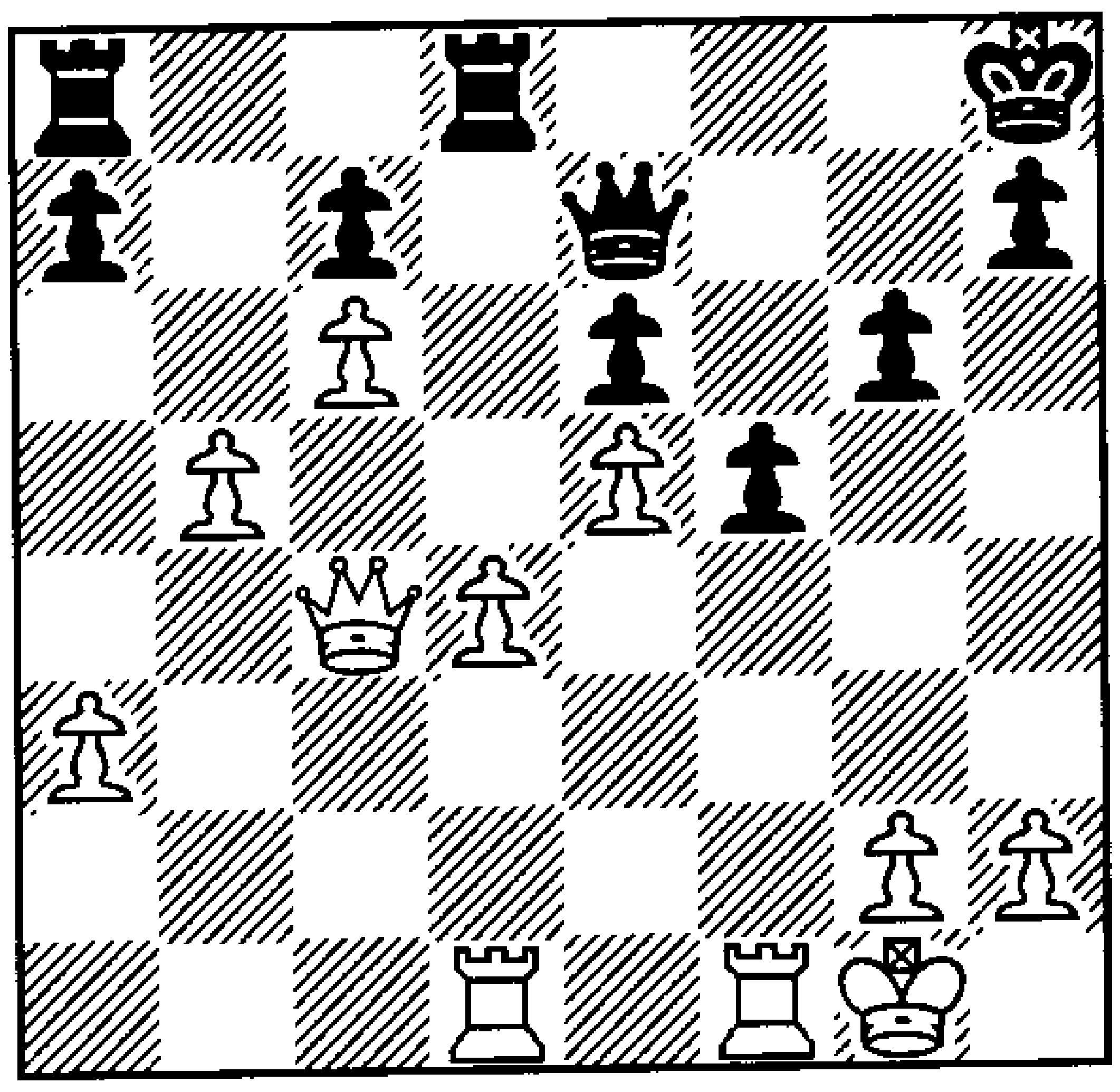
If 33 ♗a2, then 33...a6!

33...♘xc4

'If 33...♘d5 there would have followed 34 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 35 ♖xf5 ♖xd4 36 ♖xd4 exf5 37 ♕d5 h6 38 e6, and the win for White is not difficult.' (Chigorin)

34 ♕xc4 g6

Both 34...♖d5? 35 ♖xf5 and 34...♕xa3? 35 ♕xe6 ♕e3+ 36 ♔h1 ♖xd4 37 ♖xd4 ♕xd4 38 ♕xf5 were bad.



35 d5?

Whereas with his preceding moves Chigorin had let the win slip a little, this is simply a blunder leading to the loss of his extra pawn. Botvinnik recommended 35 a4 ♖d5 36 ♖d3 ♔g7 37 ♖b1 ♔f7 38 a5 ♖b8 39 ♖b4 ♔g7 40 ♖d1 ♔f7 41 ♖db1 when b5-b6 cannot be prevented, but 37...♕h4!? 38 ♕b4 (or 38 ♕c3) 38...♔g8 is more tenacious. Chigorin considered the similar variation 35 ♕c5 ♕f7! 36 a4 ♖d5 37 ♕c4, 'and nevertheless doubted whether the game could be won.'

But, as was shown by Tarrasch, after 35 ♕c5 ♕f7! White could have won by 36 d5! exd5 37 e6! ♕xe6 38 ♖fe1 ♕d6 (38...♕f6 39 ♖e7 ♖ac8 40 ♖d7 wins) 39 ♕xd6 ♖xd6 40 ♖e7 a6 (40...♖c8 41 ♖de1 intending 42 ♖d7) 41 a4 axb5 42 axb5 ♖b8 43 ♖xc7 ♖xb5 44 ♖e1 ♖b8 (or 44...♖d8 45 ♖ee7 d4 46 ♖cd7 ♖g8 47 c7) 45 ♖ee7 ♖dd8 46 ♖xh7+ ♔g8 47 ♖cg7+ ♔f8 48 c7 ♖b1+ 49 ♔f2 ♖c8 50 ♖d7 ♔e8 (50...♔g8 51 ♖he7 ♔f8 52 ♖e5) 51 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 52 ♖h8+.

35...exd5 36 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 37 ♕xd5 ♖d8! (this is the point!) **38 ♕a2**

Or 38 ♕c4 ♕xe5 with equal chances.

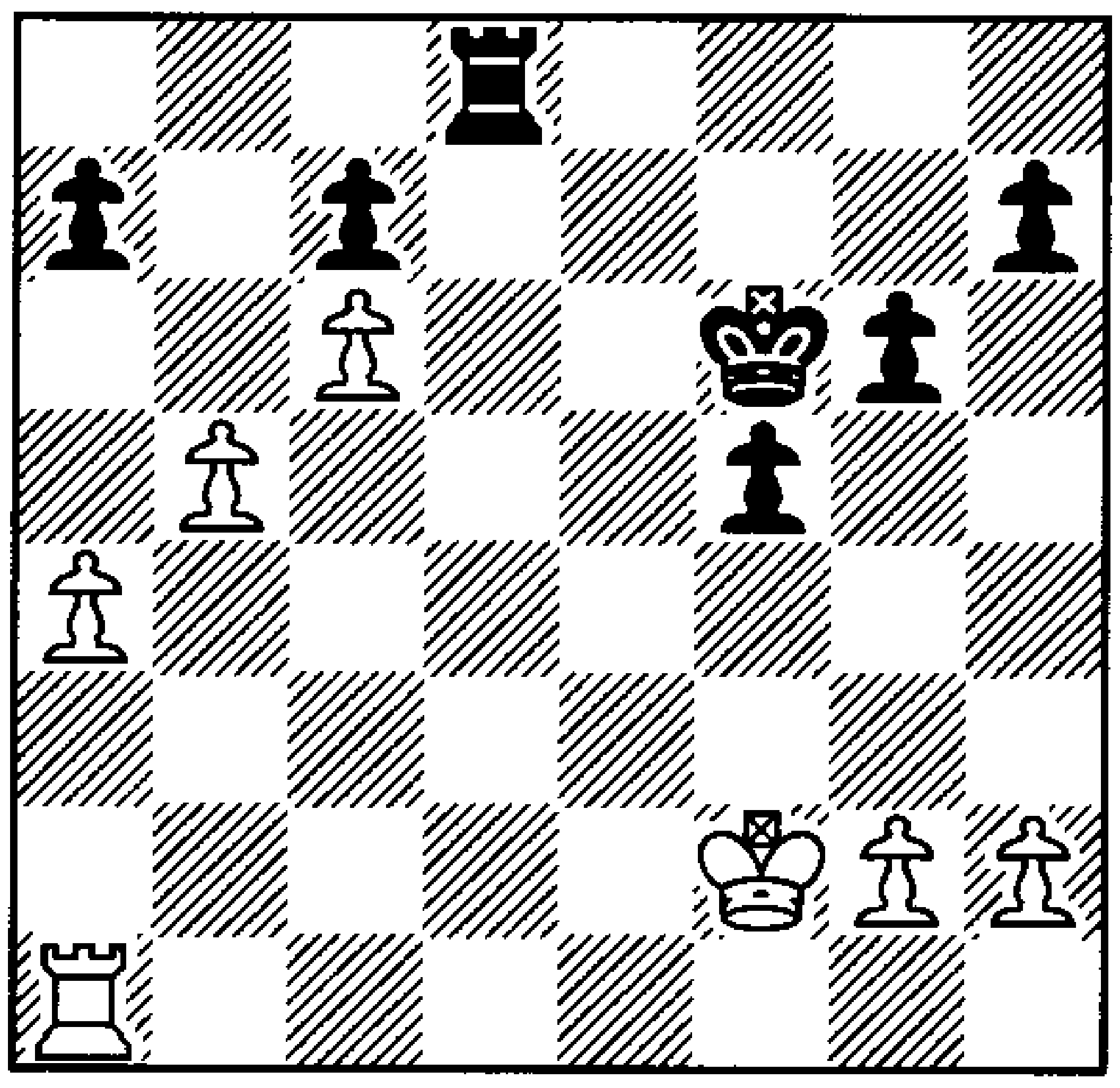
38...♕xe5

For some reason none of the commentators mentioned the obvious 38...♕c5+! 39 ♕f2 ♕xb5 (picking up an important pawn) 40 ♕xa7 ♕xe5 with a dead draw!

39 ♕a1!

The transition into a rook ending leaves White with some practical winning chances.

39...♕xa1 (but not 39...♖d4? 40 ♖e1 ♕f6 41 ♖e6! ♖d1+ 42 ♕xd1 ♕xe6 43 ♕d8+ ♕g8 44 ♕xc7 and wins) **40 ♖xa1 ♔g7 41 ♔f2 ♔f6 42 a4**



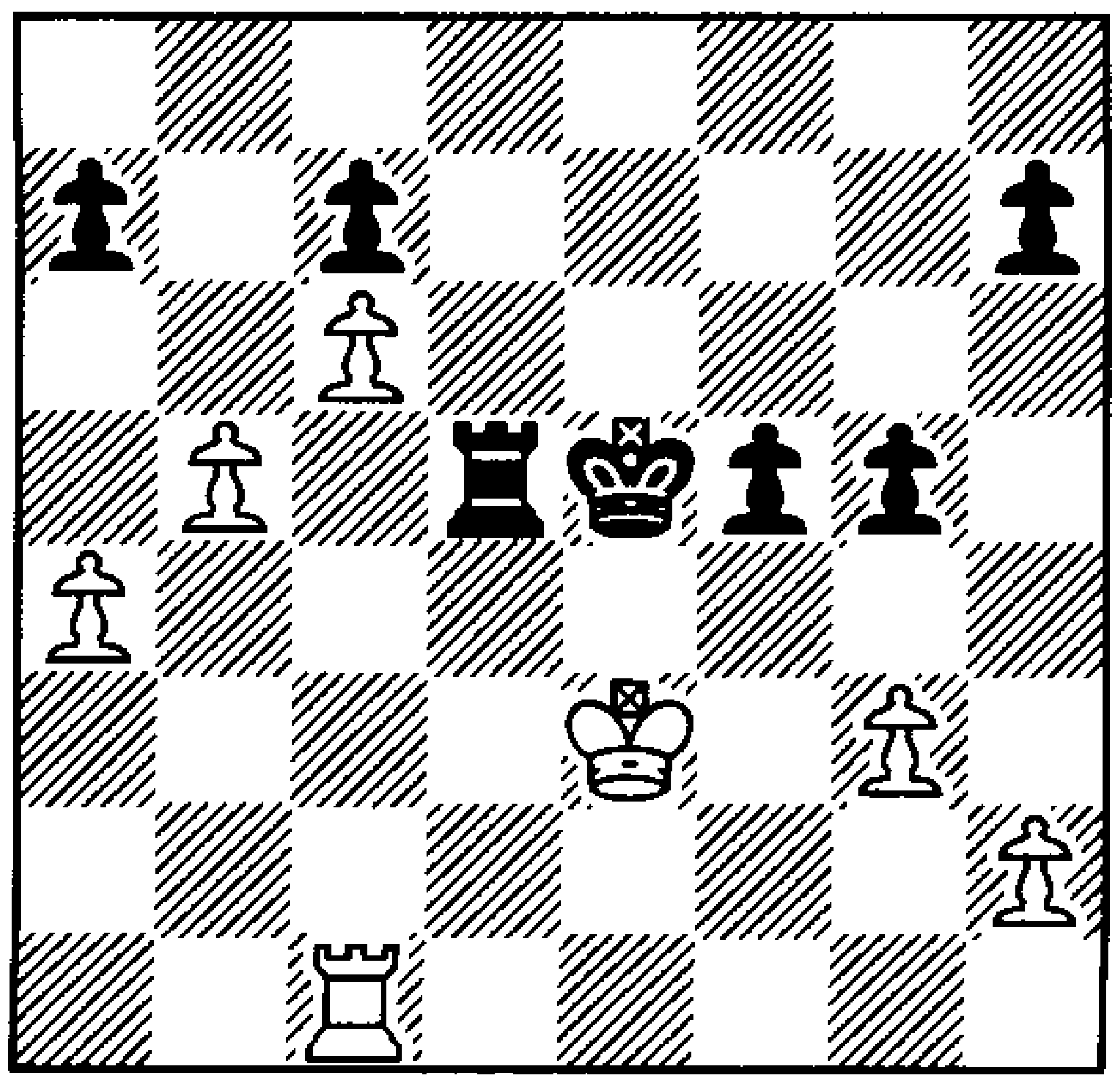
42...♖d5

Tarrasch called White's advantage 'enormous', whereas according to Botvinnik it is only 'definite' and he recommended the simplifying 42...a6!? 43 ♖b1 axb5 44 ♖xb5?! ♖d6 45 ♖c5 ♖d4 46 a5 ♔e6 47 ♔e3 ♖a4 and ...♔d6 equalising, or 43 ♔e3 ♔e6 44 h4 ♖d5 45 ♖b1 axb5 46 axb5 ♔d6 and White is tied to the defence of his b5-pawn.

43 ♔e3 ♔e5 44 ♖c1 g5

It is too late for 44...a6? 45 b6!; 44...f4+!? 45 ♔f3 ♖d4 46 a5 ♖b4 47 ♖c5+ ♔d6 (Tarrasch).

45 g3



45...h5

'The decisive mistake. After the calm 45...♔d6 it is doubtful whether White would have been able to invade (considering that after the exchange of rooks he loses): 46 ♖c4 ♖e5+ 47 ♔f3 (47 ♔d3 ♖d5+, and 48 ♔c3? is not possible because of 48...♖c5) 47...♖d5, and the danger of the b5-b6 breakthrough is not so great.' (Tarrasch) 'Simpler and stronger was 45...h6, supporting the g5-pawn.' (Botvinnik)

However, as we will see, the plan of defence chosen by Black in the game was also not at all bad.

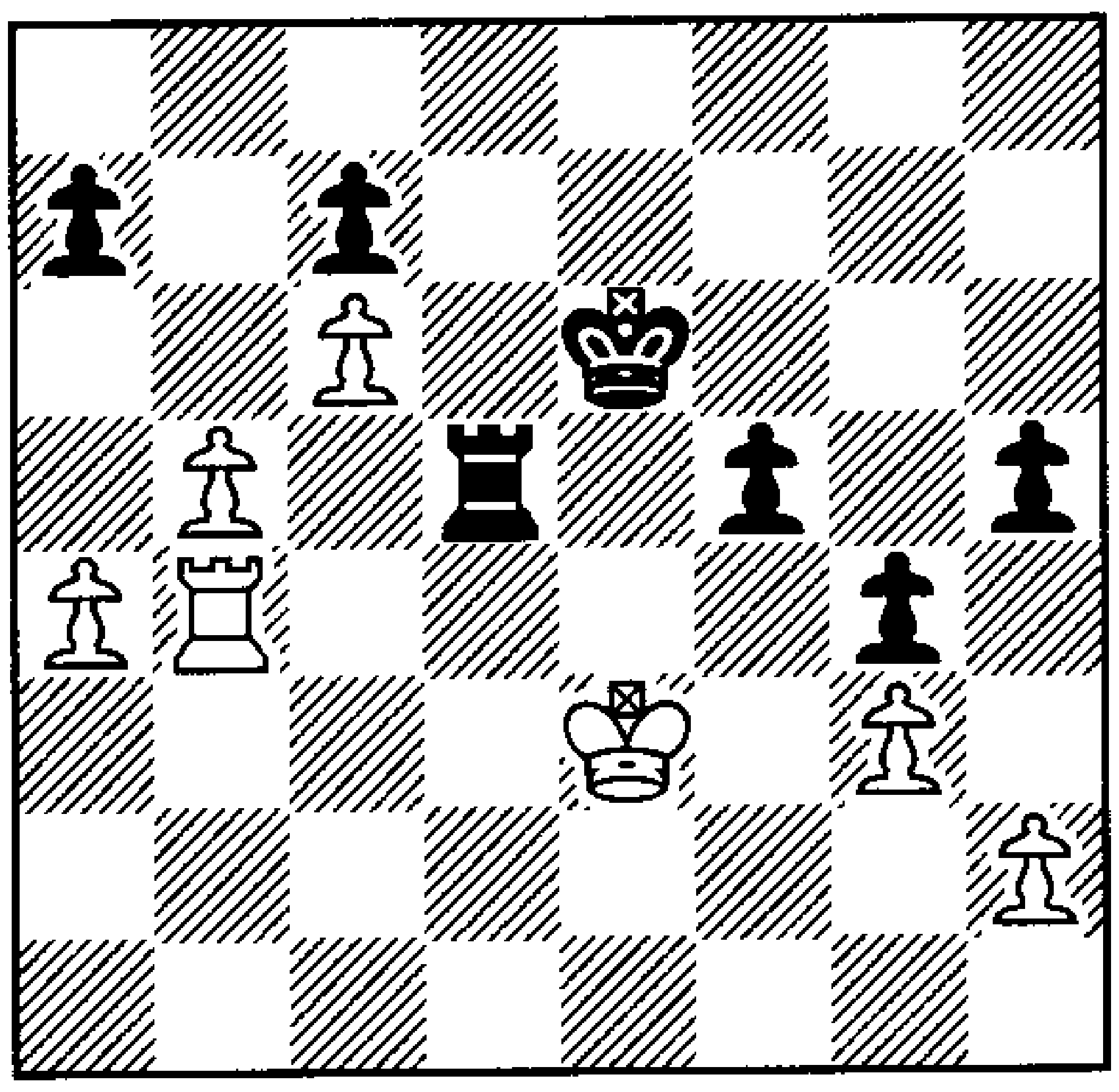
46 ♖c4 g4

Fixing the h2-pawn! 'The exchange of rooks would now have led to a loss for Black: 46...♖d1 47 ♖c5+ (*47 h4 gxh4 48 gxh4 ♖e1+ 49 ♔d2 ♖a1! – G.K.*) 47...♖d5 48 ♖xd5+ ♔xd5 49 h4!' writes Tarrasch, having in mind 49...gxh4 50 gxh4 ♔c5 51 ♔f4 ♔b4 52 ♔g5 ♔xa4? 53 ♔xh5 ♔xb5 54 ♔g5 a5 55 h5 a4 56 h6 a3 57 h7 a2 58 h8♕, but overlooking the deadly 52...f4! 53 ♔xf4 ♔xa4 54 ♔g5 ♔xb5 55 ♔xh5 a5 and wins. Botvinnik suggested

47...♔e6 48 a5 ♖b1 49 ♔d3 ♔f6 50 ♔c2 ♖b4 51 ♔c3 ♖b1 52 ♖d5 ♔e6 53 ♖d7 ♖xb5 54 ♖xc7 ♖xa5 with equality, regarding the move ...g5-g4 as merely 'a new weakening'.

47 ♖b4 ♔e6

'Black should have played 47...♔d6, for example: 48 ♖d4 ♖xd4! (*but not 48...♔c5? 49 ♖xd5+ ♔xd5 50 ♔f4 ♔c5 51 ♔xf5 ♔b4 52 ♔e6! – G.K.*) 49 ♔xd4 ♔e6 50 a5 ♔d6 51 a6 ♔e6 52 ♔e3 ♔d6 53 ♔d4 and a draw is inevitable.' (Botvinnik) But should he really?...



48 a5!

The only chance: 48 ♖d4 ♖e5+! 49 ♔d3 ♖e1 50 ♔d2 ♖h1 is equal (Botvinnik).

48...♔f6

Vasyukov and Nikitin recommend 48...♖c5!? (48...♔e5? 49 b6 axb6 50 axb6 cxb6 51 c7 ♖c5 52 ♖b5! wins; 48...♔d6 49 ♖b2! and ♔f4 with some initiative) 49 ♔f4 ♔f6 or 49 ♔d4 ♔d6, impeding the white king, and summarise: 'Black plays uncertainly and with every move he worsens his position.' We shall see, we shall see...

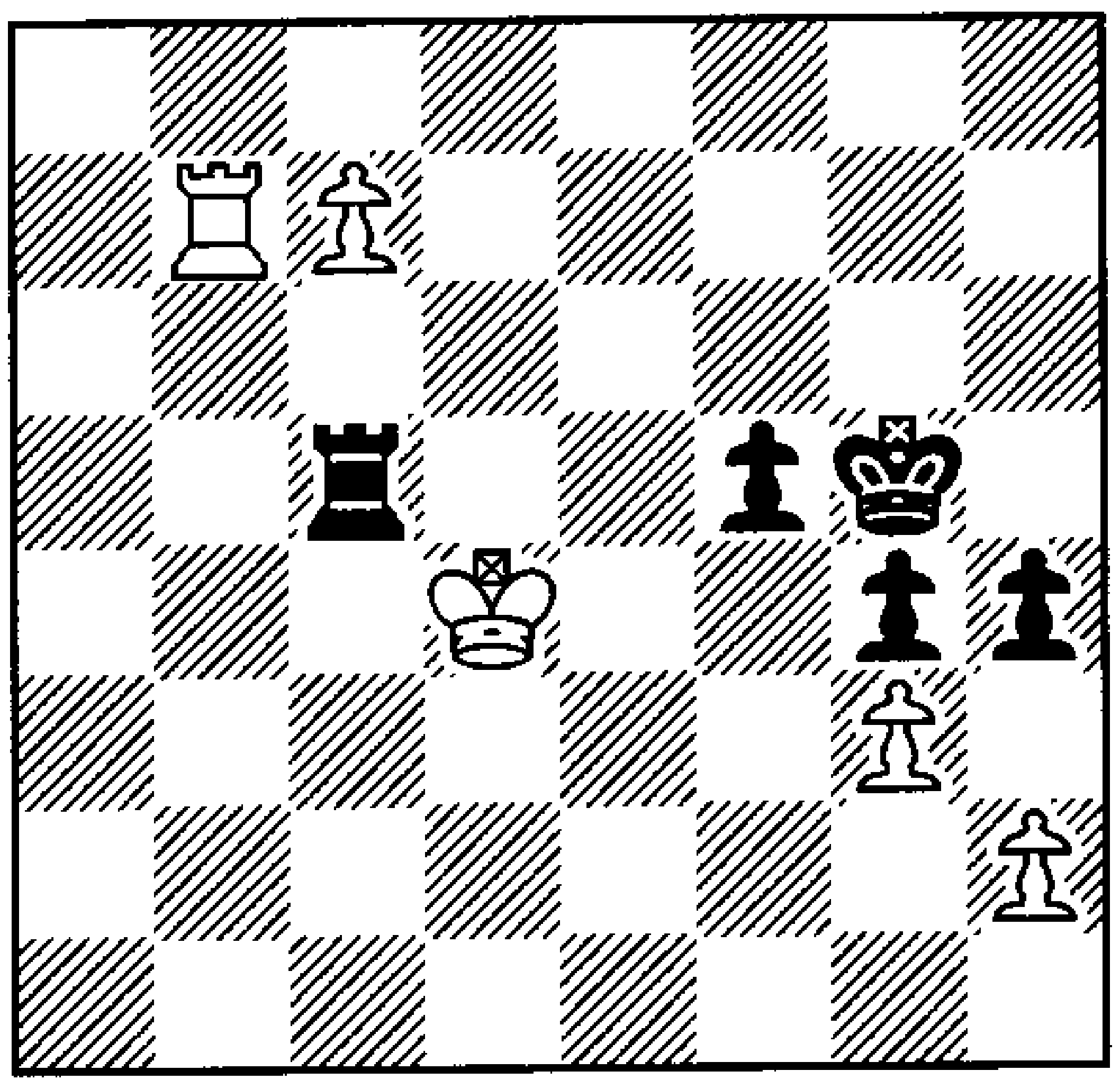
49 b6 axb6 50 axb6 cxb6 51 c7! ♖c5 52 ♖xb6+ ♔g5

'The decisive mistake. 52...♔f7! would still have retained drawing chances – 53 ♖b7 ♔e6 54 ♔f4 ♔d7 55 c8♕+ ♔xc8 56 ♖h7 ♖c2 57 ♖xh5 ♖f2+ 58 ♔e5 ♔d7 59 ♖xf5 ♖xh2 60 ♔f4 ♔e6 61 ♔xg4 ♖h8 and a draw (Botvinnik).

But 102 years after the game(!) the Russian master Fridstein showed on the pages of the magazine *Shakhmaty v Rossii* (1995, No.2) that Black had been written off too early.

53 ♖b7 h4 54 ♔d4

The culminating point of this exciting battle, which was not noticed by any of the earlier commentators.



54...♖c1?

Here it is, the decisive mistake! 'After 54...♖c2! 55 ♔e5 (55 ♔d3 ♖c6 or 55 gxh4+ ♔xh4 is pointless) 55...h3! everything is clear – White has no winning chances: 56 ♖a7 ♖e2+ 57 ♔d6 ♖d2+ 58 ♔c6 ♖xh2 59 c8♕ ♖c2+ 60 ♔d7 ♖xc8 61 ♔xc8 h2 62 ♖h7 f4. Had Tarrasch found this resource, the tone of the comments would no doubt have been completely different and about his play they would have written "a brilliant defence". Such is the price of one bad move!' (Fridstein)

55 ♔e5 hxg3 56 hxg3 ♖c3

'Black also fails to save the game by 56...f4 57 gxf4+ ♔h4 58 ♔d6 ♖d1+ (*or 58...g3 59 ♖b8 g2 60 c8♕ ♖xc8 61 ♖xc8 g1♕ 62 ♖h8+ and ♖g8+ – G.K.*) 59 ♔e7 ♖c1 60 ♔d7 ♖d1+ 61 ♔c8 g3 62 ♔b8 ♖c1 63 c8♕ ♖xc8+ 64 ♔xc8 ♔g4 65 ♖f7! ♔f3 66 f5 g2 67 ♖g7. This is by no means the only way to win; there are also others.' (Chigorin)

57 ♔d6 (57 ♖a7!) **57...♖d3+ 58 ♔e7 ♖e3+ 59 ♔d6 ♖d3+ 60 ♔e5 ♖c3 61 ♖a7! f4**

After 61...♖c1 62 ♔d6 the king hides from the checks at a8 and the c7-pawn queens.

62 ♔d4! 1-0

62...♖c1 63 ♖a5+ and 64 ♖c5. 'This entire difficult and interesting ending was played with great mastery by Chigorin. The game lasted eight hours.' (Tarrasch)

Another vivid illustration of the strong and weak sides of both contenders for the throne, and of Chigorin in particular. He played very creatively, and riskily in the strategic sense. And again Tarrasch, after gaining an excellent position, got himself entangled: in complicated, irrational play he was nevertheless inferior to his opponent! But when the time came to defend, he defended very well. However, Chigorin made rather a mess of converting his enormous advantage and even blundered a pawn. Fortunately, in the endgame his opponent, already anticipating a draw, created some minor difficulties for himself and overlooked a critical moment.

Tarrasch steadfastly survived the three successive defeats and in the 21st game he gained his ninth win. But in the 22nd he missed a simple draw, and with it victory in the match: the grandiose battle ended with a score of +9 -9 =4.

For the proud Doctor this was an unpleasant surprise: after all, he had played the match 'more correctly' than Chigorin (he was in general a 'correct' player) and, by the logic of things, he should have won, but... the purely chess potential of his opponent proved to be higher! It was another matter that Chigorin often lacked accuracy in the realisation of his cosmic ideas – this can happen with great masters.

In the historic sense it was very important that the new Steinitz-Tarrasch School had at that time such a powerful opponent. Since when creative disputes die away in chess, stagnation begins! It was in the big matches that there was a fierce head-to-head clash of different creative tendencies, one could even say of different chess ideologies, and it was in the course of these clashes that modern chess thinking took shape. As they say, in disputes the truth was born...

Steinitz was not only the first to express his positional principles, but also – this is another of his historical merits – he created a tradition whereby leading masters, in contrast to the stars of the past, considered it a matter of honour to formulate and uphold their chess views. Perhaps not as revolutionary as those of the first world champion, but also principles! Thus Chigorin, who criticised Steinitz for his 'abstraction' and the somewhat dogmatic nature of his theory, advocated a different, concrete approach to chess, and was also perpetually searching and contemplating paths of his own.

Generally speaking, the tradition of not only winning a game, but also explaining why it was won, dates back to Philidor. But he was guided by excessively general concepts, which at the end of the 19th century no longer worked – so greatly had the level of chess understanding risen. And since from the time of Philidor nothing significant in this field had occurred, it can be considered that it was Steinitz who opened the era of the scientific explanation of chess wins. The great Steinitz-Chigorin confrontation was perhaps the first stage in this era. The champion deservedly won, and his theory became the dominating one.

However, modern chess is unthinkable without the contribution made by Chigorin. In contrast, say, to Zukertort, an outstanding student and to some extent an imitator of Anderssen, Mikhail Ivanovich put forward a number of completely new, revolutionary ideas and entire trends. But they, like many of Steinitz's views, could not then win complete recognition, since they were ahead of their time (that was the case, for example, with the first 'King's Indian experiments'). And in addition, Chigorin was not always able to demonstrate his correctness at the board: like his historic opponent, he was excessively obstinate in upholding his opening set-ups, which suffered from serious positional defects.

The Tarrasch-Chigorin match became an important stage in the development of chess understanding. True, while they were determining in St Petersburg which of them was the main challenger, in distant America the impatient Lasker had persuaded Steinitz to play him in a match for the world crown. And in the spring of 1894 the world acquired a new, young chess king.

It is appropriate to recall that a year later Lasker declined an offer by the St Petersburg Chess Society to organise a match between him and Chigorin, and their first meeting took place in August 1895, at the start of the historic tournament in Hastings. In this famous game Chigorin chose an unusual defence, which bears his name in opening theory.

Game 31

Em.Lasker-M.Chigorin

Hastings 1895, 2nd round

Chigorin Defence D07

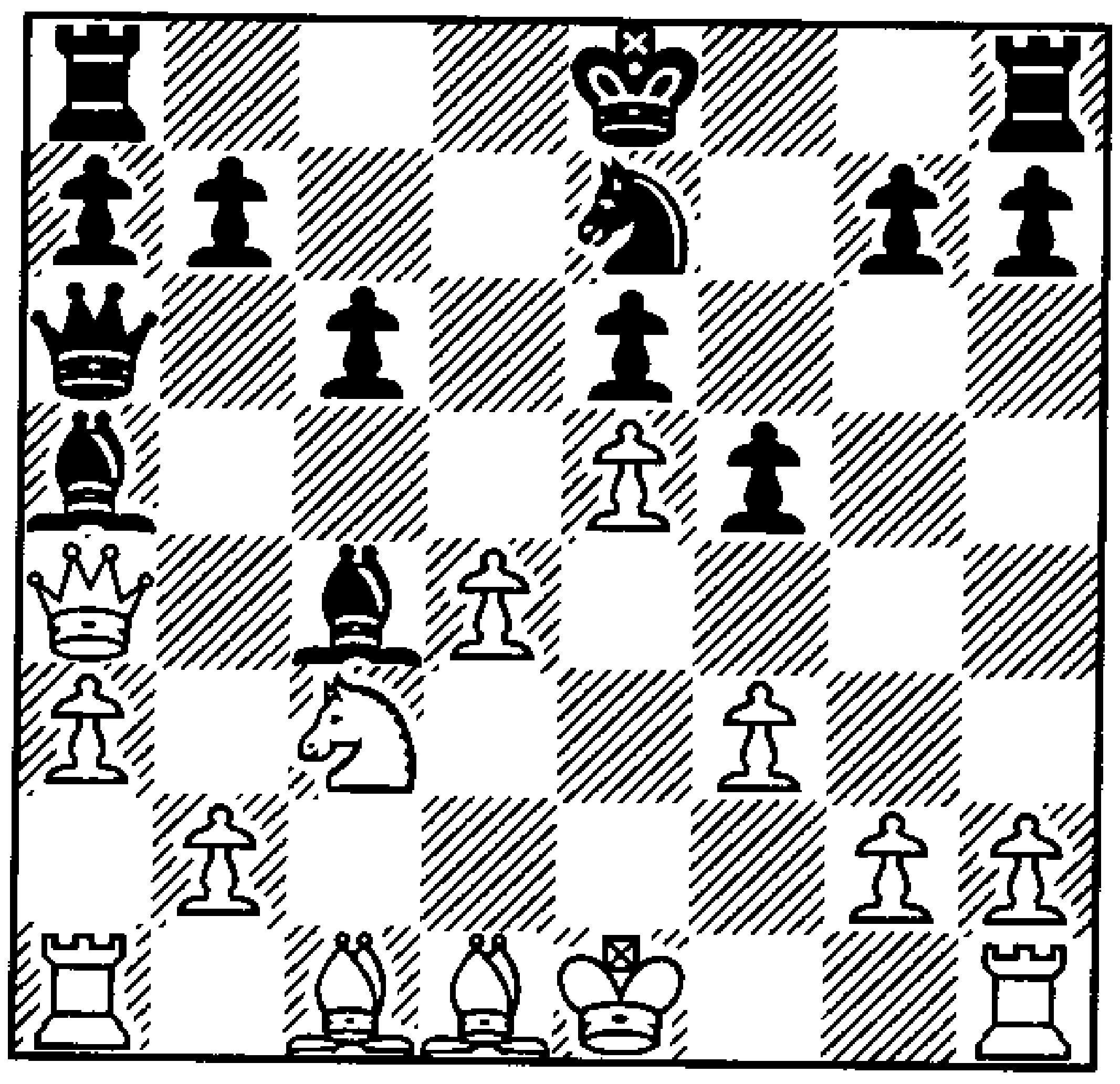
1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3

If 2 c4 there would have followed 2...♘c6!? The idea of piece pressure on the centre followed by the attack and blockade of it was far ahead of its time, anticipating the discoveries of the hypermodern era: the Alekhine Defence, the Grünfeld Defence, and the whole complex of Nimzo-Indian set-ups (it was no wonder that Nimzowitsch called Chigorin his teacher!).

2...♗g4 3 c4 ♗xf3

Chigorin more often began with 3...♘c6 – 4 e3 e6 (after 4...e5?! Steinitz played 5 ♕b3!) 5 ♘c3 ♗b4 6 ♗d2 ♘ge7, or 6 ♕b3 ♗xf3 (6...♘ge7!? 7 ♗d2 0-0; 6...♗xc3+!? 7 bxc3 ♗xf3 8 gxf3 ♘a5 9 ♕c2 ♘xc4 10 ♗xc4 dxc4 11 ♕a4+ c6 12 ♕xc4 ♕d5!) 7 gxf3 ♘ge7 8 ♗d2 0-0 etc.

In my opinion, more lively is 4 cxd5 ♗xf3 5 gxf3! ♕xd5 6 e3 (Kasparov-Smyslov, Vilnius 11th matchgame 1984). But not 5 dxc6 ♗xc6 6 ♘c3 e6 7 e4 ♗b4! 8 f3 f5! The battle for the light squares! The game Pillsbury-Chigorin (St Petersburg 1895/96) continued 9 e5?! (correct is 9 ♗c4! ♕h4+ 10 g3 ♕e7 11 0-0 with sharp play) 9...♘e7 (9...♕h4+!? 10 g3 ♕h5 11 ♗g2 0-0-0 12 0-0 is unclear) 10 a3 ♗a5 11 ♗c4 ♗d5 12 ♕a4+?! (better are both 12 ♕b3 and 12 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 13 ♕b3, or 12...♗xc3+ 13 bxc3 ♕xd5 14 ♖b1 b5 15 ♗g5) 12...c6 13 ♗d3 ♕b6! 14 ♗c2 ♕a6! 15 ♗d1 (15 b4 ♕c4! 16 ♗b2 ♗b6 etc.) 15...♗c4!



16 f4? (more tenacious was 16 b4 ♗b6 17 ♕xa6 ♗xa6 18 ♗e3 ♖d8 – 18...f4?! 19 ♗f2 ♘f5 20 ♗e2! ♗xd4 21 ♗xd4 ♘xd4 22 ♗xa6 bxa6 23 0-0-0 – 19 ♗e2 ♗xe2 20 ♘xe2 ♘d5) 16...0-0-0 17 ♗e3? (essential was 17 b4 ♗b6 18 ♕xa6 bxa6 19 ♘e2 a5) 17...♘d5 18 ♗d2 ♘b6 19 ♕c2 ♖xd4 20 ♖c1 (20 ♔f2 ♘d5!) 20...♗d3 21 ♕b3 ♘c4 22 ♔f2 ♘xd2 23 ♕xe6+ ♔b8 24 ♗f3 ♕b6 25 ♔g3 ♘xf3 26 gxf3 ♗c4 27 ♕xf5 ♗xc3 28 bxc3 ♖d2... 0-1. The young Pillsbury did not understand this unfamiliar position. Lasker would not have lost so feebly!

4 gxf3 ♘c6 5 ♘c3 e6 6 e3 ♗b4 7 cxd5 ♕xd5!?

7...exd5 is more solid, but it is piece pressure on the centre that Chigorin wants to create.

8 ♗d2

An example from the play of the 10th world champion: 8 ♗g2 ♕d7 9 0-0 ♘ge7 10 f4 ♖d8 11 a3 ♗xc3 12 bxc3 ♘a5 13 ♕h5 (13 ♕c2!?) 13...b6 14 a4 ♘d5 15 ♗a3 ♘c4 16 ♖fc1 c5 17 ♕e2 ♘xa3 18 ♖xa3 0-0 with equal chances (Taimanov-Spassky, 27th USSR Championship, Leningrad 1960).

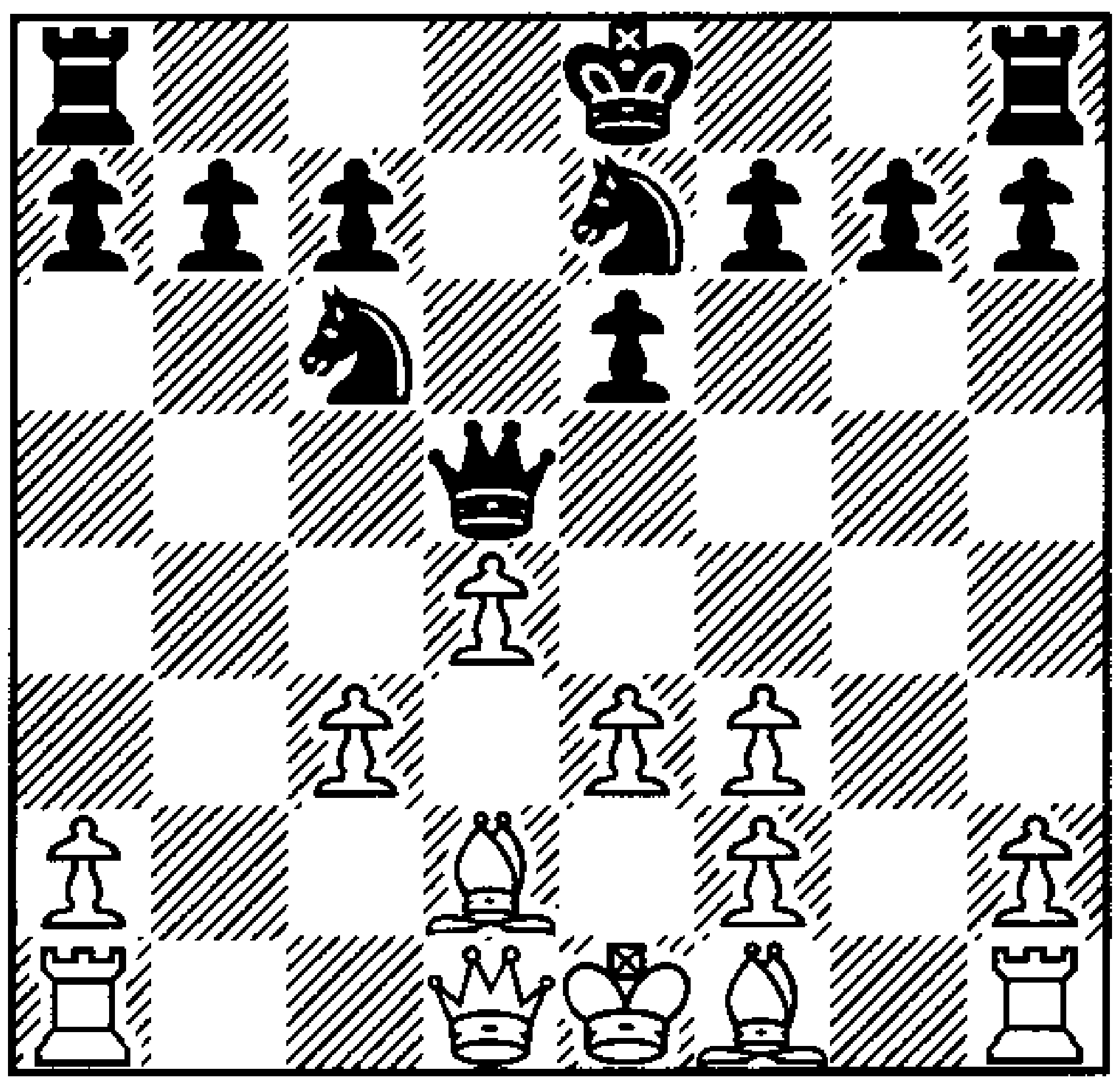
8...♗xc3

The demonstrative exchange of bishops for knights was a reproach to the new school, which gave an obvious preference to bishops and a strong pawn centre. Incidentally, it was thanks to Chigorin that skilful play with the knights came to be regarded as a distinguishing feature of the 'Russian Chess School'.

8...♕d7 is more flexible, for example: 9 ♕a4?! ♘ge7 10 ♗b5?! a6 11 a3 ♗xc3 12 ♗xc3 0-0 13 ♗e2 ♘d5 14 ♗d2 ♖ad8 15 ♖c1 e5! 16 dxe5 ♘f4! with advantage to Black (Steinitz-Chigorin, London 1899). Of course, more is promised by 9 f4! ♘ge7 10 ♗g2.

9 bxc3 ♘ge7

'Chigorin, a genius of practical play, considers it his privilege at every convenient opportunity to challenge the principles of contemporary chess theory,' Steinitz wrote about the opening of this game. And he was right!



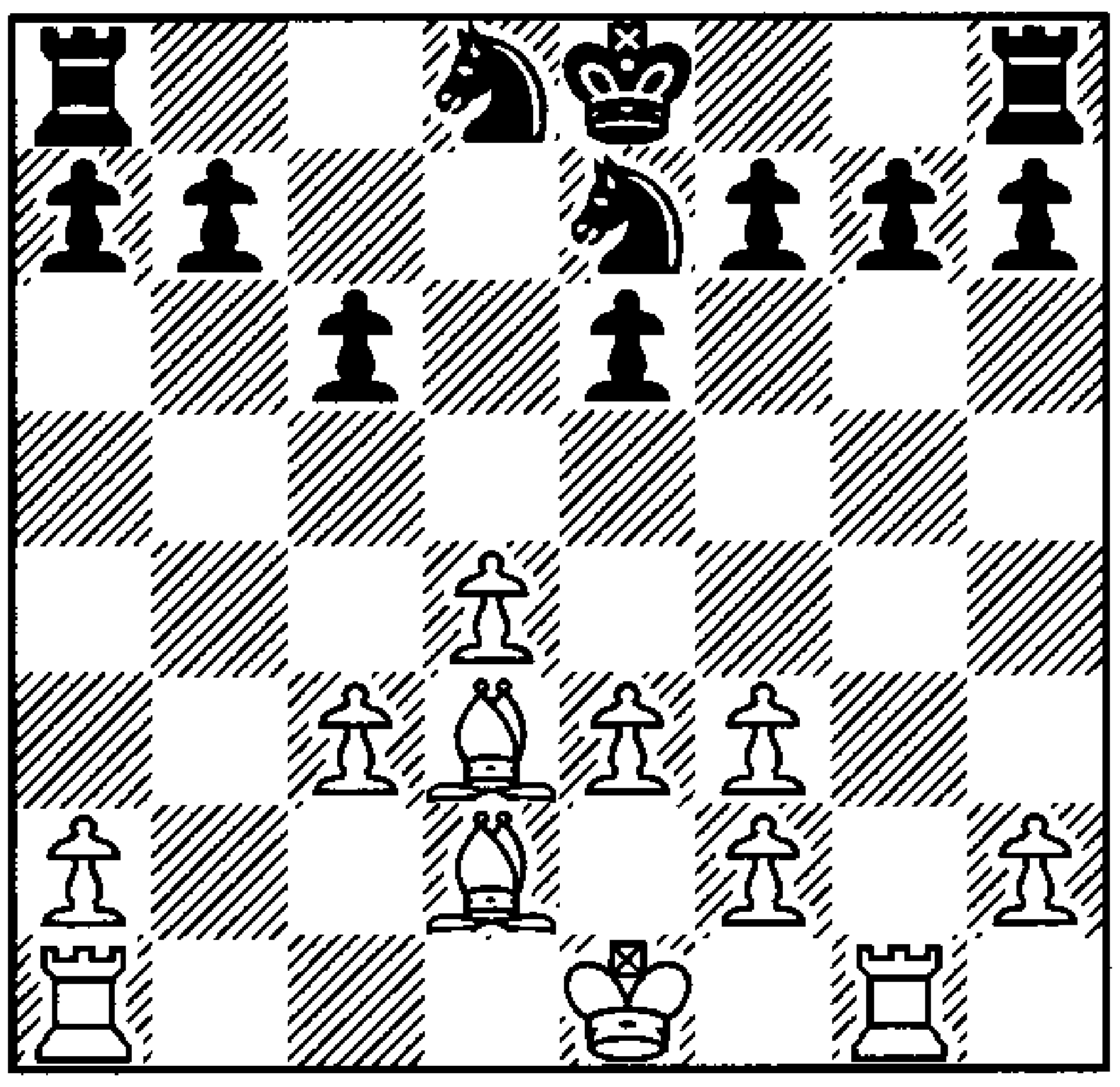
10 ♖g1 (the alternative was 10 c4 and 11 f4) **10...♕h5**

'Stronger was 10...0-0 11 c4 (if 11 ♕b3 there can follow 11...♕xf3 12 ♗g2 ♕h5 13 ♕xb7 ♕xh2 14 0-0-0 ♖ab8!) 11...♕h5 12 ♗c3 ♘g6 13 ♖g3 e5 14 d5 ♘ce7.' (Vasyukov, Nikitin)

11 ♕b3! (with the threat of 12 ♖xg7 ♘g6 13 ♕xb7) **11...♘d8?!**

'After the natural 11...0-0 12 ♖g3 (12 ♕xb7 ♕xh2 13 ♖g3 ♖fc8 followed by ...♖a8-b8-b6 and ...♘f5 is most probably favourable to Black) 12...♘d8 13 e4! ♘g6 14 ♖h3 ♕a5 15 ♗d3 e5! the resulting position, although better for White, is one where Black has definite counterplay.' (Vasyukov, Nikitin)

12 ♕b5+! (but not 12 ♖xg7? ♘g6) **12...♕xb5 13 ♗xb5+ c6 14 ♗d3**



By present-day measures this endgame is already virtually a win for White: his two mighty bishops give him an enormous advantage. But Black plays on as though nothing has happened...

14...♘g6 15 f4 0-0 16 ♔e2 (it is too early for 16 f5? on account of 16...♘h4) **16...♖c8?!**

An inaccurate implementation of the correct plan with ...c6-c5-c4. 16...f5 was essential, although here too after 17 a4 ♖c8 18 ♗c1 ♖f7 19 ♗a3 all the chances are with White.

17 ♖g3

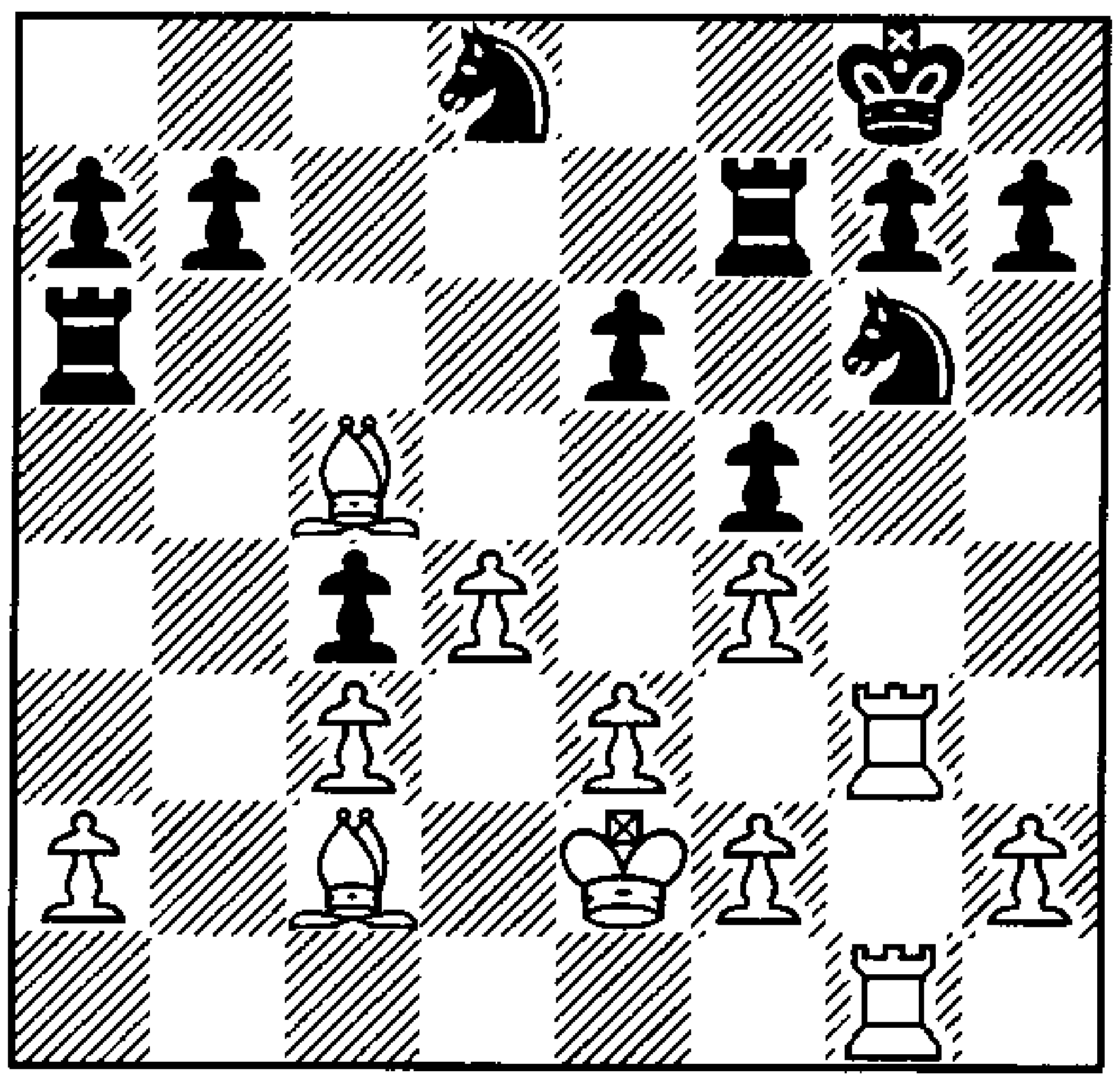
Serious consideration should have been given to opening the game by 17 f5! exf5 18 ♗xf5 ♖c7 19 c4 (Levenfish), or 18...♘e6 19 f4 ♖fe8 20 ♔f2 with a solid advantage.

17...c5 18 ♖ag1?

It was not yet too late for 18 f5!, but Lasker has another idea. 'White is planning an attack with 19 h4 or 19 f5. This looks rather menacing, but it is comparatively easily refuted.' (Romanovsky)

18...c4! 19 ♗c2 f5! 20 ♗c1 ♖f7! 21 ♗a3 ♖c6! 22 ♗c5 ♖a6

Black successfully manoeuvres 'in Nimzowitsch's blockading style' and Lasker is unable to demonstrate the advantages of his position.



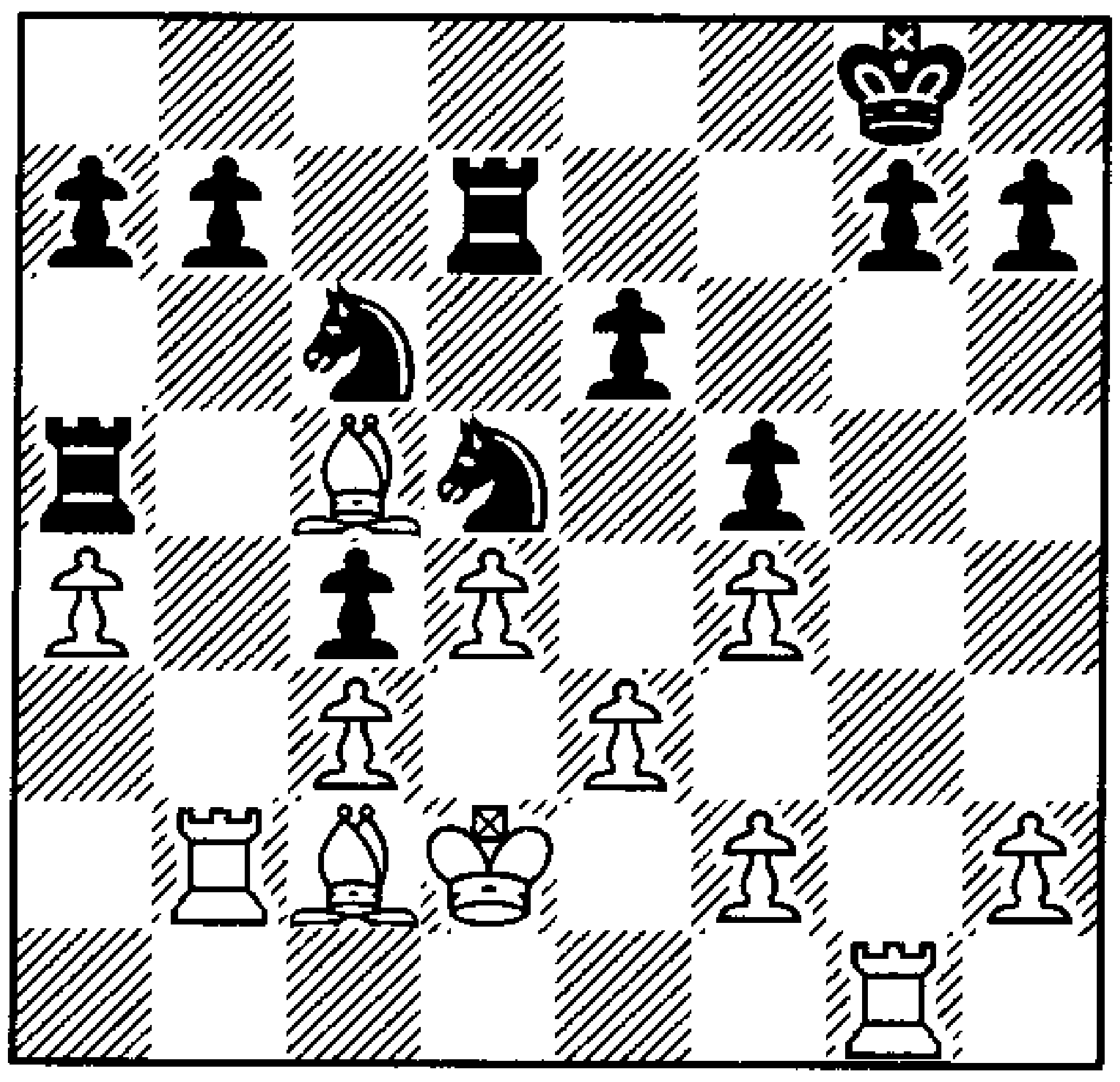
23 a4

This self-restriction of the c2-bishop is forced: weak is 23 a3?! b6 24 ♗b4 ♘c6 25 a4 ♘xb4 26 cxb4 ♘e7 and ...♘d5!

23...♘c6 24 ♖b1 ♖d7 25 ♖gg1 ♘ge7 26 ♖b2

By 26 ♗xe7!? ♘xe7 27 ♔d2 ♘d5 28 ♖b5 White would still have retained some edge.

26...♘d5 27 ♔d2 ♖a5



White's centre has become fixed, his bishops 'apathetic'... With his original manner of play (how could he shut in his own rook at a5?!) Chigorin confused the great Lasker! The champion is unable to hit on any useful plan.

28 ♖gb1 b6 29 ♗a3 g6 30 ♖b5 ♖a6! 31 ♗c1 ♘d8

'Black's manoeuvring, although forced, is by no means of a waiting nature. With the threat of penetrating with his knight to e4 he wants to induce f2-f3 and then mount an attack on the enemy pawn in the centre.' (Romanovsky)

32 ♖a1 ♘f7 (32...♘b7 33 ♗a3 ♘a5 is also interesting) **33 ♖bb1?!**

In view of Black's possible reply, better was 33 ♗a3!? (but not 33 h4 ♘d6 34 ♖bb1 ♘e4+!), preventing both 33...g5 34 ♖g1! and 33...♘d6 34 ♗xd6! ♖xd6 35 a5.

33...♘d6?!

According to Steinitz, 33...g5! was strong. Then 'White would face an unpleasant choice: whether to give up his f4-pawn or allow the invasion of the knight at e4 after 34 fxg5 ♘xg5.' (Vasyukov, Nikitin) Here Chigorin's knights really are good!

'Steinitz thought that 33...g5 34 fxg5 ♘xg5 35 ♖a3 ♘e4+ 36 ♗xe4 fxe4 followed by 37...♖g7 would have led to a winning attack. Later Levenfish pointed out that 35 ♗b2 was a bolder move for White, but even here after 35...♘e4+ 36 ♗xe4 fxe4 Black's dominant knight forces the position to be evaluated in his favour. True, his advantage is hardly sufficient for a win: there can follow 37 ♖g1+ ♖g7 38 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 39 ♔e2 (preparing f2-f3) with quite good resources for a tenacious struggle for a draw.' (Romanovsky)

34 f3! (at last White has hit on the correct idea of the e3-e4 break) **34...♘f7 35 ♖a3!**

Freeing the king from having to defend the c3-pawn.

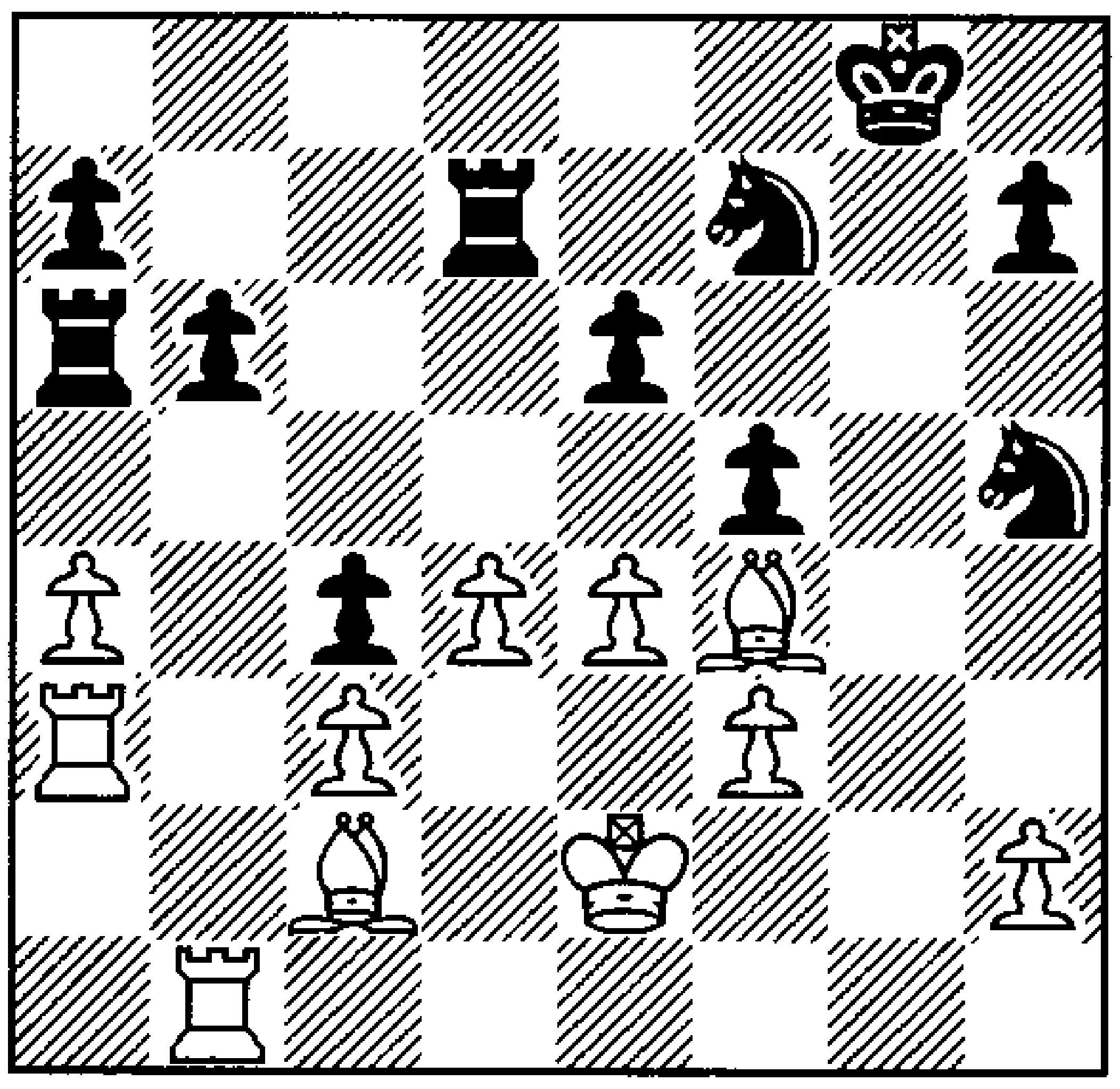
35...g5?!

At the wrong time! If 35...♖a5, then 36 ♔e2! and e3-e4. However, he could have tried to create a fortress by 35...♘d6! 36 ♔e2 ♖f7! 37 ♗d2 ♖a5.

True, according to Romanovsky 'it is very doubtful whether Black could have prevented the advance of the e-pawn, for example: 37...♔f8 38 ♔f2 ♔e7 39 ♔g3 ♔f6 40 ♖aa1, then ♖f1, ♖ae1 and nevertheless e3-e4.'

36 ♔e2! (threatening 37 fxg5 ♘xg5 38 e4) **36...gxf4 37 e4 ♘f6 38 ♗xf4!** (the game is opened up to White's obvious advantage)

38...♘h5



39 ♗e3?!

In a time scramble White misses a chance to consolidate his unexpected advantage. Previous commentators recommended 39 ♗d2, but to me the most promising seems to be 39 ♖g1+!? ♔f8 40 ♗c1! ♖a5 41 ♖a1.

39...f4! (again a blockade!) **40 ♗f2 ♖a5?!**

More consistent was 40...e5! 41 ♖g1+ ♔f8, when 42 dxe5?! ♘xe5 43 ♖g5? is bad on account of 43...♖d2+!

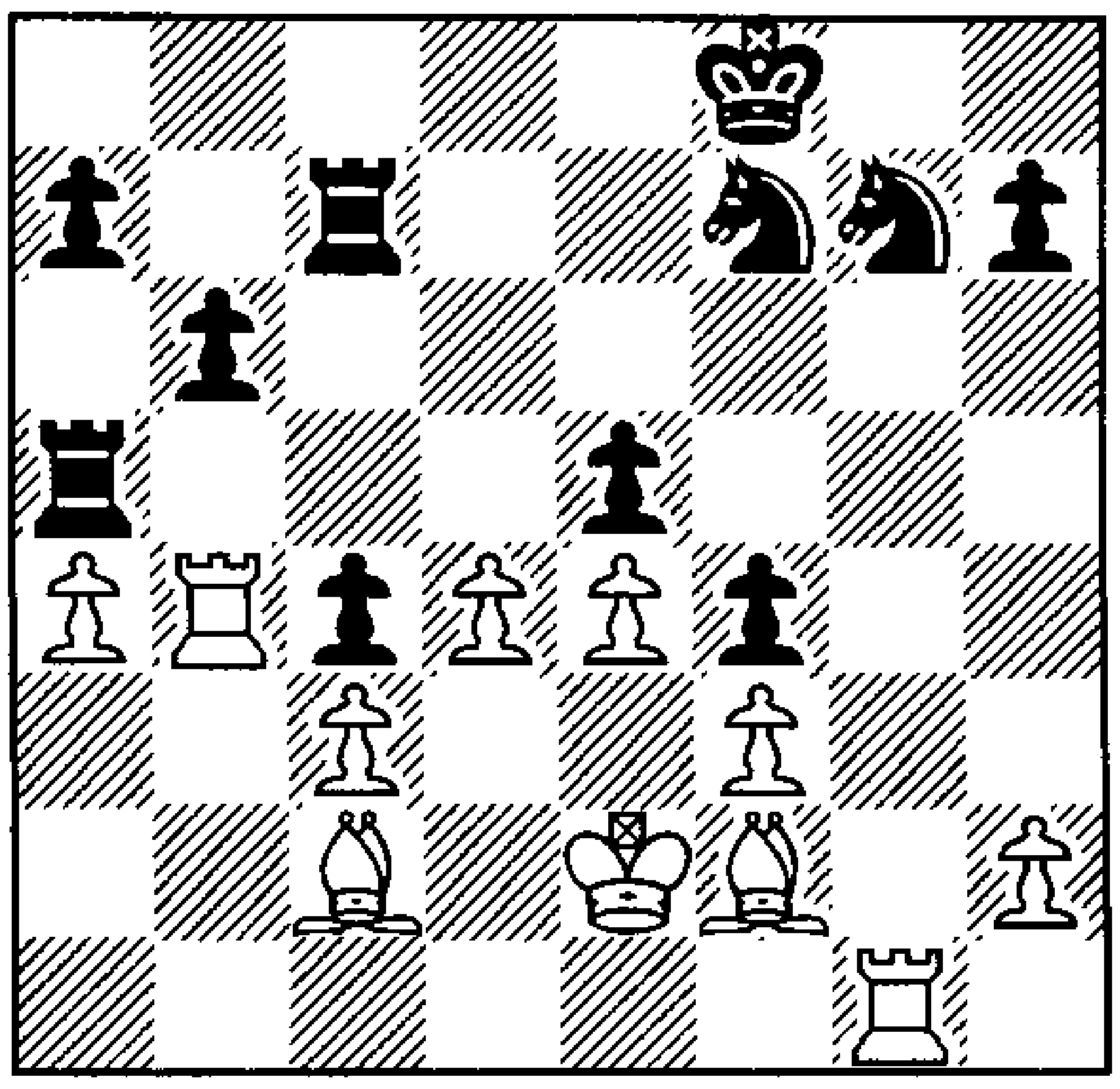
41 ♖g1+ ♔f8

41...♖g5 42 ♖xg5+ ♘xg5 43 a5! favours White.

42 ♖aa1?! (42 e5! b5 43 ♖aa1 was more energetic) **42...e5! 43 ♖ab1 ♘g7 44 ♖b4**

Also after 44 d5!? ♘e8 45 ♗h4 ♘h8 46 ♖g5 ♘g6 47 ♗f2 Black has a rather indifferent position.

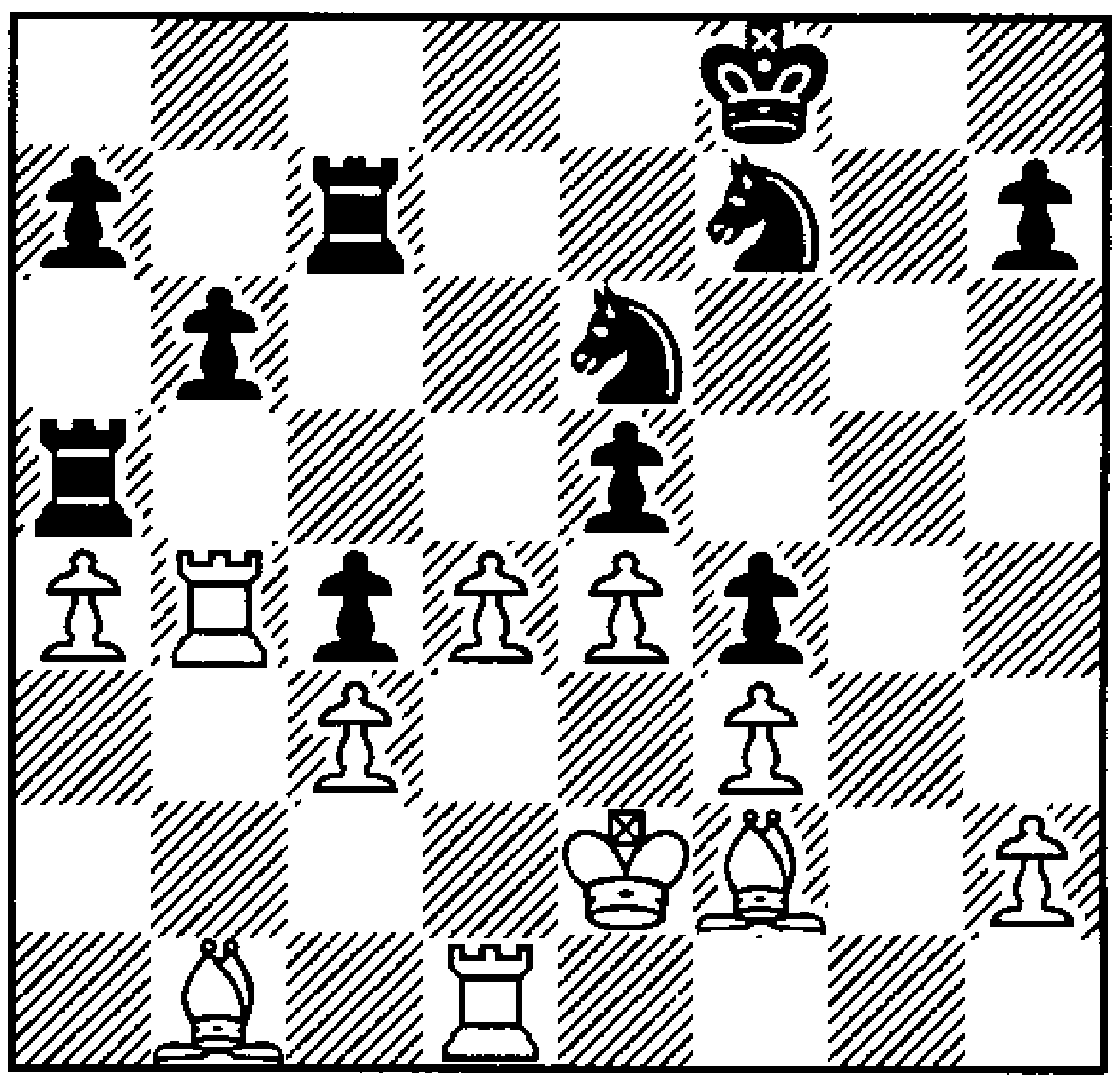
44...♖c7



45 ♗b1?!

45 ♖b5 ♖xb5 46 axb5 ♘d6 47 ♗a4 suggests itself.

45...♘e6 46 ♖d1?! (46 ♗a2!)



46...♘ed8!

The play is 'seesawing'. In a difficult situation Chigorin plays with uncommon resourcefulness (...♘c6 is threatened), and at a critical instant Lasker is unable to withstand the tension...

47 ♖d2?

A blunder. 47 d5 ♘d6 48 ♗c2 ♘8b7 49 ♖g1 ♖g7 50 ♖xg7 ♔xg7 would have suited Black, but the calm 47 ♗c2! would still have left White with the better chances.

Vasyukov and Nikitin recommended 'opening the game by 47 dxe5! ♘c6 48 e6! – but not 48 ♖b5 ♖xb5 49 axb5 ♘cxe5 50 ♖d5 ♔e7! (*although here White has the advantage: 51 ♗d4 ♔e6 52 h4 – G.K.*) – 48...♘fe5 49 ♗c2 ♘d3 50 ♖b5, and Black would have had to overcome the greatest difficulties.' But after 48...♘xb4! 49 cxb4 ♖xa4 50 exf7 ♖xb4 he would have overcome them very quickly.

47...♘c6!

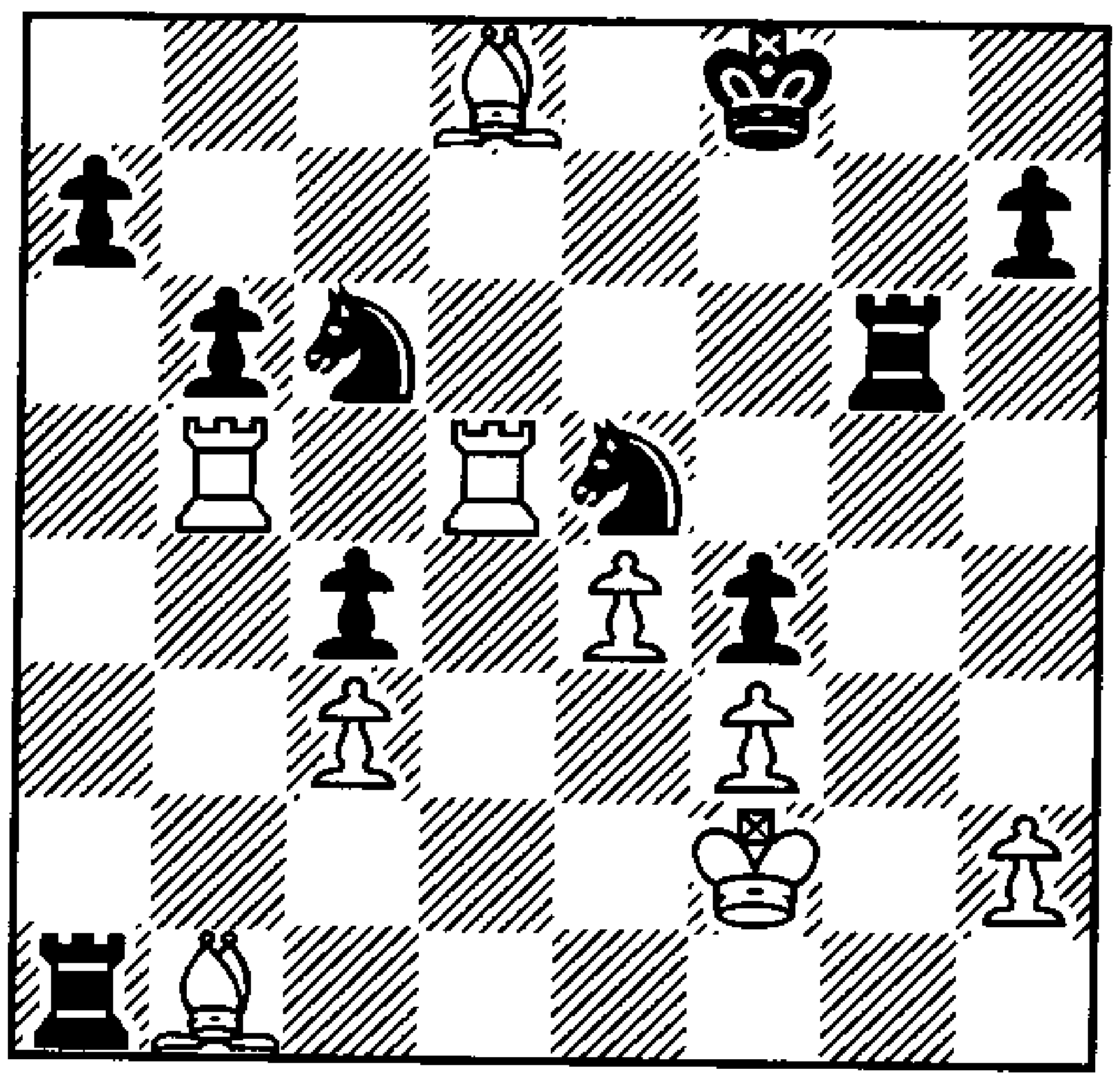
Now the initiative securely passes to Black, and Lasker is unable to save the game.

48 ♖b5

Both 48 ♖xc4? ♘d6! and 48 ♗c2? exd4 49 ♗xd4 ♘xb4 50 cxb4 ♖h5 are also bad.

48...♖xa4 49 dxe5 ♘fxe5 (the time has come to talk about the advantage of the two knights!) **50 ♗h4?! ♖g7 51 ♔f2 ♖g6 52**

♖dd5 ♖a1 53 ♗d8



53...♘d3+! 54 ♗xd3 (54 ♔f1 ♘cb4! with mate) **54...cxd3 55 ♖xd3**

If 55 ♗g5, then 55...♖xg5! 56 ♖xg5 d2.

55...♖ag1! 56 ♖f5+ ♔e8 57 ♗g5 (desperation: 57 ♖xf4 ♖6g2+ 58 ♔e3 ♖e1 mate) **57...♖6xg5 0-1**

What a crushing defeat!

In this ultra-tense, far from faultless duel, it is not so much variations that are important, as the text of the game itself: Chigorin was after all playing the world champion, and, as always, he upheld his principles! In the given instance, this was a struggle of two knights against two bishops in a semi-closed position and the blockade of a pawn centre. And on the whole, although Lasker gained the better chances, he did not demonstrate a superiority in strategic manoeuvring. In the complicated play Chigorin maintained this flexibility of thinking throughout the entire game. It is not surprising that later Lasker always aimed to play more simply against him.

In the opinion of many, the Russian master played better than anyone else in the tournament. Before the 20th, penultimate round, he was in sole first place! But here, after failing to withstand the tension and 'violating the competitive regime', he lost an unthinkable game with White to Janowski, probably the worst in his life.

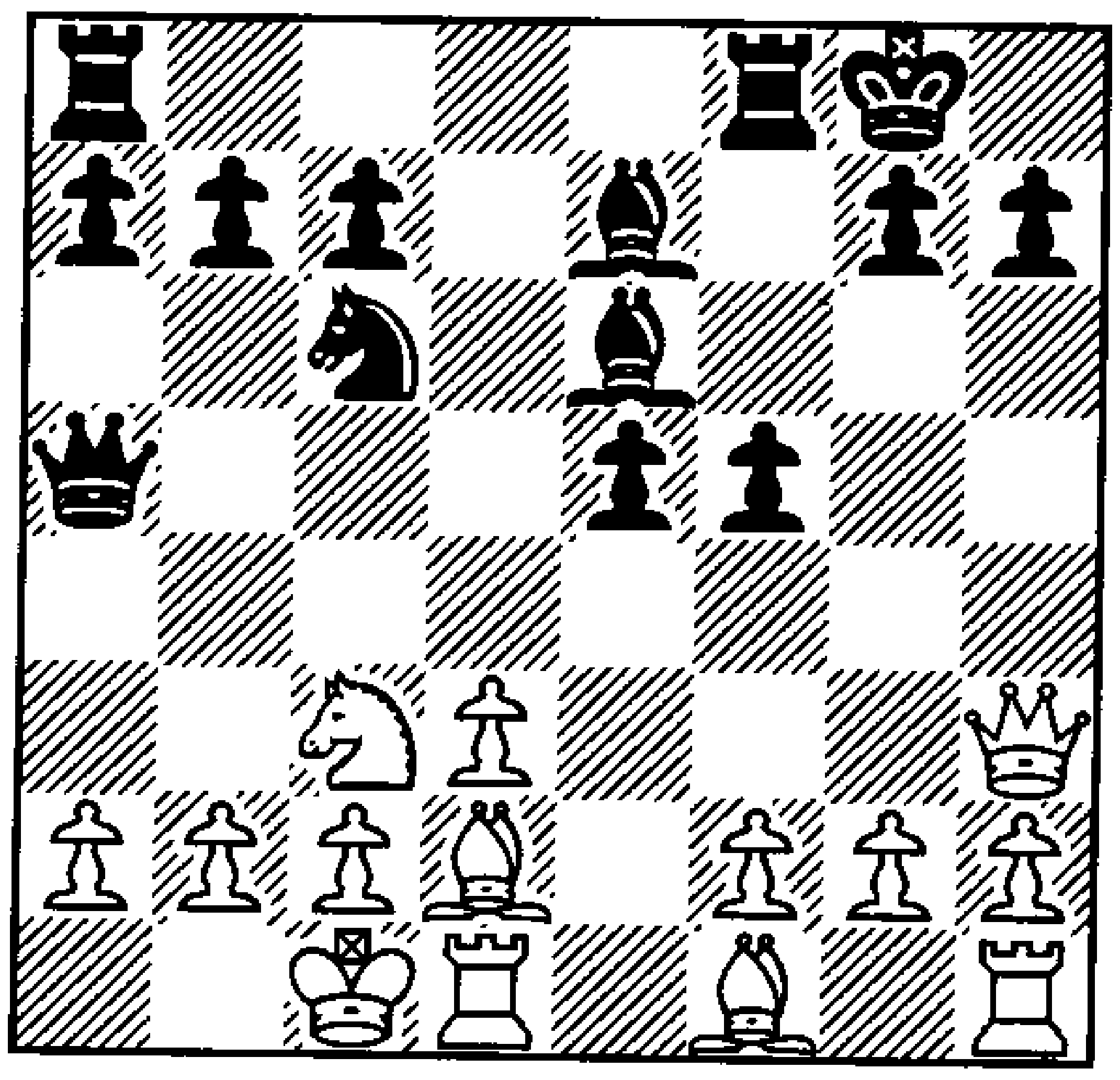
Game 32

M.Chigorin-D.Janowski

Hastings 1895, 20th round

Vienna Game C26

1 e4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 d3 (Chigorin never used to play this!) **3...d5 4 exd5? ♘xd5 5 ♕e2? ♘c6 6 ♗d2? ♗e7 7 0-0-0? 0-0 8 ♕f3?? ♗e6 9 ♘ge2 f5 10 ♕h3 ♕d6 11 ♘xd5? ♕xd5 12 ♘c3 ♕a5**



13 a3? ♗xa3 14 ♘b1 ♗xb2+ 15 ♔xb2 ♕a2+ 16 ♔c1 ♘d4, and White resigned. The numerous question marks to the white moves were attached by the victim himself.

This occurrence, in my opinion, is even more tragic than the finish to the 23rd game of the second match with Steinitz (*Game No.26*). Truly, as Tal used to say, every chess player forges his own tournament fortune! As a result Mikhail Ivanovich finished half a point behind the winner, Pillsbury, after defeating him in their individual game (first round, King's Gambit), and finishing ahead of Lasker, Tarrasch and Steinitz.

'In Hastings I once again experienced Chigorin's enormous strength,' Lasker later recalled. 'I was therefore convinced that I would inevitably have to play a match with him for the world championship.' Alas, fate decided otherwise...

The Ageing Lion

And so, Steinitz conceded the throne, thus becoming the first... ex-world champion in the history of chess. The years had taken their toll. But in individual games the old lion could still show his claws, reminding everyone of his former might.

At the height of Hastings 1895, that genuine 'tournament of the century', the 59-year-old ex-king won a sparkling game, which received the first brilliancy prize. Up till then his opponent Curt Bardeleben had been undefeated with 7½ out of 9 (including a win against Lasker!).

Game 33

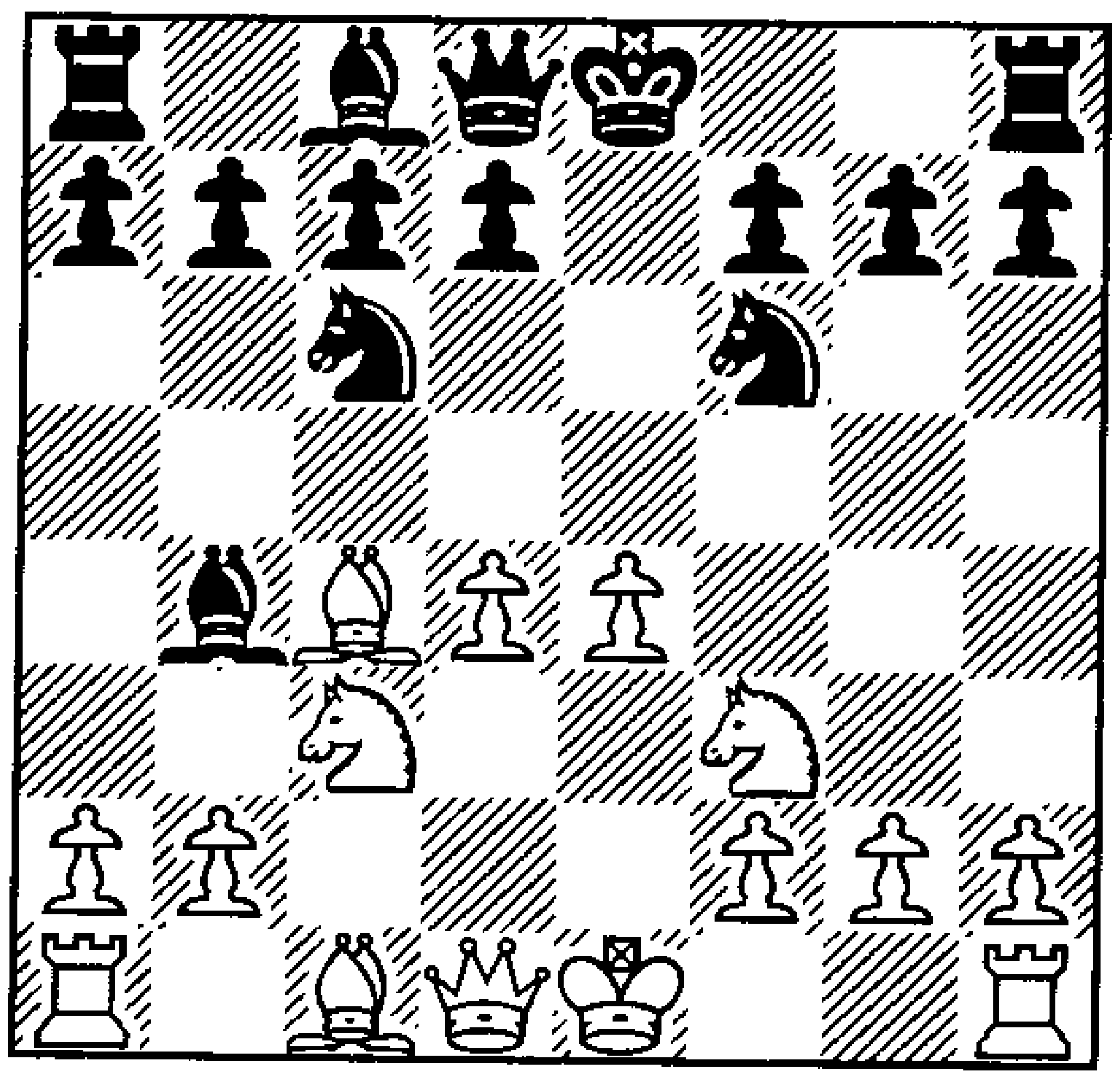
W.Steinitz-C.Bardeleben

Hastings 1895, 10th round

Giuoco Piano C54

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 c3 ♘f6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 ♗b4+ 7 ♘c3!?

Greco's ancient gambit variation. The 'main' continuation 7 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 8 ♘bxd2 d5 9 exd5 ♘xd5 10 ♕b3 is harmless in view of 10...♘a5! (this is simpler than 10...♘ce7 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♖fe1 c6) 11 ♕a4+ ♘c6 with equal chances.



7...d5?!

Bardeleben avoids repeating the game Steinitz-Schlechter, played at the start of the tournament, where after 7...♘xe4! 8 0-0 ♗xc3 9 bxc3 d5 10 ♗a3?! ♗e6? 11 ♗b5 ♘d6 12 ♗xc6+ bxc6 13 ♘e5 0-0 14 ♘xc6 ♕f6 Black maintained the balance with difficulty. The correct way for him was found later, in the Steinitz-Lasker return match (Moscow 3rd matchgame 1896): 10...dxc4! 11 ♖e1 ♗e6 12 ♖xe4 ♕d5 13 ♕e2 0-0-0 14 ♘e5 ♖he8, remaining a sound pawn to the good.

I should add that in 1899 the clever Møller Attack 9 d5!? (instead of 9 bxc3) made its appearance, while exactly one hundred years later two noteworthy games on this theme were played in Fritz 6-Anand (Frankfurt rapidplay 1999):

1) 9...♗f6 10 ♖e1 ♘e7 11 ♖xe4 d6 12 ♗g5, and here instead of 12...0-0? 13 ♗xf6 gxf6 14 ♕d2 Black should have preferred 12...♗xg5 13 ♘xg5 h6 14 ♕e2 (Black stands better after 14 ♘f3 0-0 or 14 ♗b5+ ♗d7 15 ♕e2 ♗xb5! 16 ♕xb5+ ♕d7 17 ♕e2 ♔f8 Bárczay-Portisch, Hungary 1969) 15...hxg5 15 ♖e1 ♗e6! 16 dxe6 f6 with sharp play;

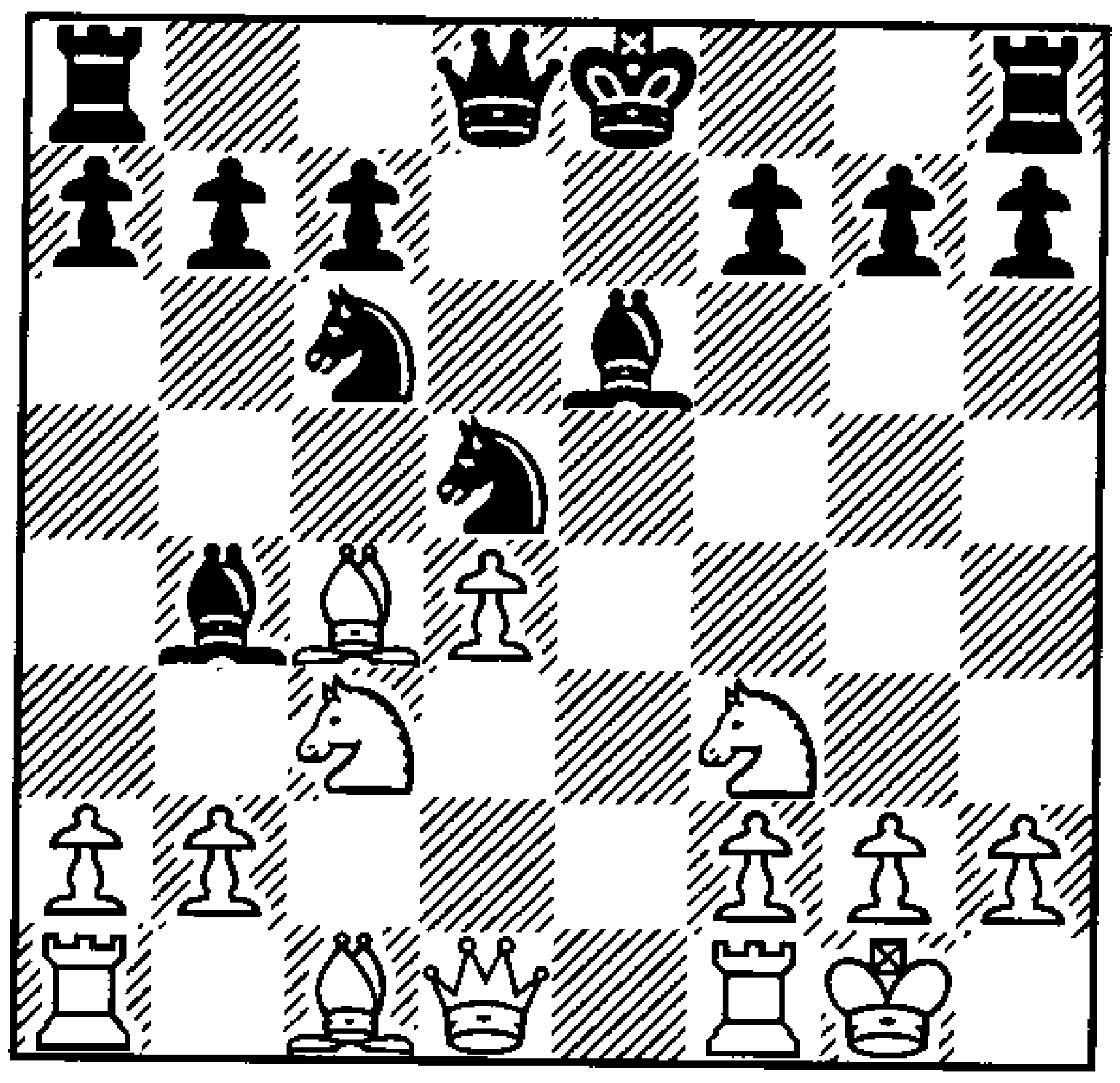
2) 9...♘e5! 10 bxc3 ♘xc4 11 ♕d4 0-0! (but not 11...♘cd6? 12 ♕xg7 ♕f6 13 ♕xf6 ♘xf6 14 ♖e1+; also not good is 11...f5, Schlechter-Lasker, London 1899) 12 ♕xe4 ♘d6 (12...b5!? is sharper, Djindjihashvili-Karpov, Mazatlan rapidplay 1988) 13 ♕d3 b6! (this had already been played many times) 14 ♗a3 ♕f6 15 ♕d4 ♕xd4 16 ♘xd4 ♗b7 17 ♗xd6 cxd6 18 ♘f5 g6 19 ♘xd6 ♗xd5, and Black converted his extra pawn. This is the modern way of combating gambits: the timely return of part of the 'booty', and it is all over...

This opening information explains why the classical 'Italian' with 4 c3 and 5 d4 occurs so rarely nowadays.

8 exd5 ♘xd5 9 0-0! ♗e6

White stands better after 9...♗xc3 10 bxc3 0-0 11 ♕c2 h6 12 ♖e1 ♗e6?! 13 ♗xh6! (Steinitz-Schiffers, Rostov-on-Don match 1896), or 9...♘b6 10 ♖e1+ ♗e7 11 ♗b3 0-0 12 d5 ♘a5 13 ♗c2 ♘ac4 14 ♕d3 f5 15 ♗b3 ♘d6 16 ♗f4 ♘d7 17 ♕e3 ♖f7 18 ♘d4 ♘f6 19 ♖ad1 (Steinitz-Blackburne, Nuremberg 1896). Black also does not gain complete equality with 9...♘xc3 10 bxc3 ♗e7 (not

10...♗xc3? 11 ♕b3! ♗xa1 12 ♗xf7+ ♔f8 13 ♗a3+ ♘e7 14 ♖xa1) 11 ♗f4 (Bilguer).



10 ♗g5 ♗e7?!

In the light of what follows, 10...♕d7 is better, for example: 11 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 12 ♖e1+ ♔f8! (12...♗e7? 13 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 14 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 15 ♕e2 ♕d6 16 ♕b5+) 13 ♖e3 ♗xc3 (or 13...f6 14 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 15 ♗f4) 14 bxc3 f6 15 ♗f4 ♖e8 16 ♘d2 with a slight advantage to White.

11 ♗xd5! ♗xd5 12 ♘xd5

If 12 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 13 ♖e1 0-0 14 ♖xe7, then 14...♗xf3! 15 ♕e1 ♗c6 16 ♕e5 ♖e8 with equal chances.

12...♕xd5 13 ♗xe7 ♘xe7

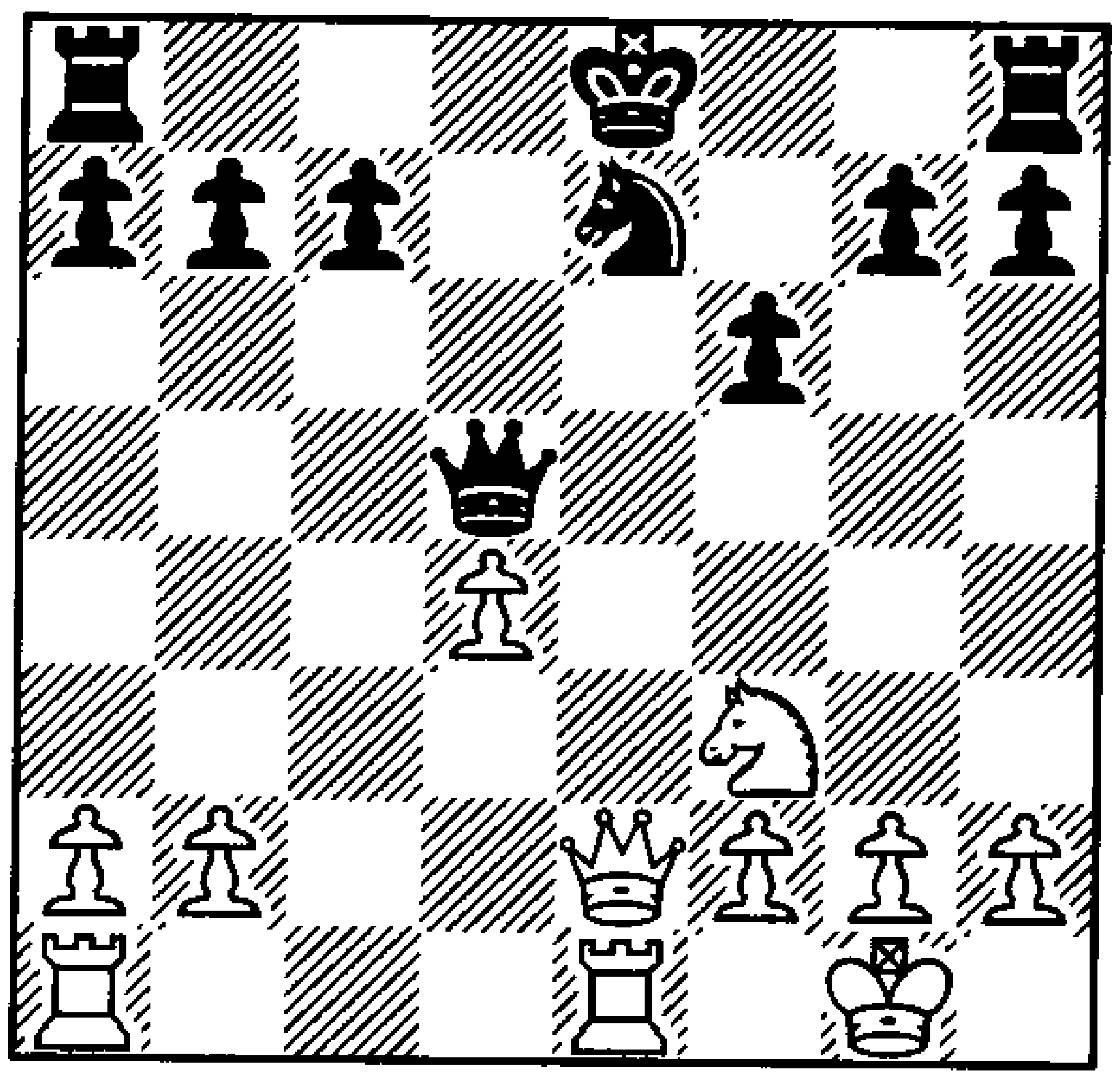
After 13...♔xe7 White retains a clear advantage by 14 ♖c1 ♖he8 (14...♔d7 15 ♕a4!) 15 ♖c5 ♕d6 (15...♕xa2 16 ♕c2 ♔d6 17 ♖b5) 16 ♕c2, although in Weiss-Seibold (correspondence 1933) he was successful with 14 ♖e1+ ♔f8 15 ♕e2 f6 16 ♖ac1 ♖c8? (16...♔f7!?) 17 ♖c5 ♕d6 18 ♕c4 (18 ♕b5!?) 18...♘d8 19 ♖d5 ♕c6 20 ♕e2! ♘f7 21 ♕e7+ ♔g8 22 ♖d7 ♕c4 23 d5!

14 ♖e1 f6

The critical position of the opening variation.

15 ♕e2?!

An imperceptible 'scratch on a sparkling diamond'. For nearly a whole century commentators looked for a more efficient way of attacking. In 1978 Igor Zaitsev suggested 15 ♕a4+!, but after 15...♔f7 (15...c6? or 15...♕d7 – 16 ♕b4!, while if 15...♔d8?! there is a choice between 16 ♖e2, 16 ♘d2 and 16 ♕b4 ♖e8 17 ♖ac1) he came to a standstill: 16 ♖ac1 ♕d6! 17 ♕b3+ ♘d5 or 16 ♕b4 ♖he8 17 ♖ac1 a5! 18 ♕a3 ♘c6 etc. And only in 1983 did Geller discover 16 ♘e5+! fxe5 (16...♔f8 17 ♘d3! with the threat of ♘f4, while if 17...g5, then 18 ♖ac1 c6 19 ♕a3 wins) 17 ♖xe5 ♕d6 18 ♕c4+! ♔f8 19 ♖ae1 ♘g8 (19...♘g6? 20 ♖f5+ and 19...♖e8 20 ♖1e4 g6 21 ♖e6! are both winning for White) 20 ♖d5 ♕c6 21 ♕b4+! ♔f7 22 ♖c5 ♕d6 23 ♕c4+ ♔f8 24 ♖xc7 and wins.



15...♕d7

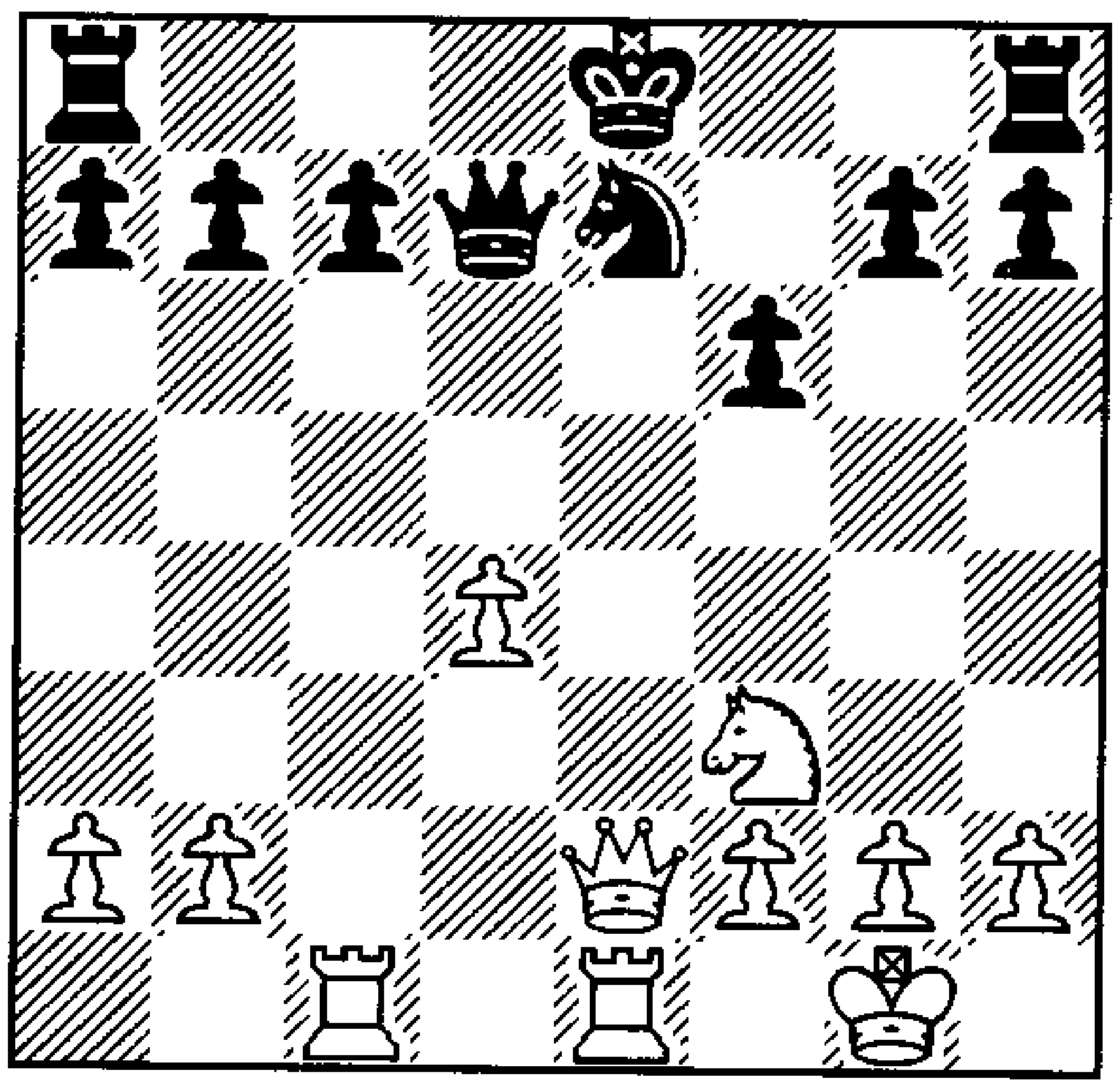
But not 15...♕d6? in view of 16 ♕b5+ ♕c6 17 ♕b4 ♕d6 18 ♕xb7.

16 ♖ac1

Here Keres suggested 16 ♕e4 c6 17 ♖e2 ♔f7 18 ♖ae1 ♘d5 19 ♕h4 with some pressure, and Romanovsky – 16 d5 ♔f7 17 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 (17...♖hd8!?) 18 ♕e6+! (18 ♘d4 ♘xd5) 18...♕xe6 19 dxe6+ ♔g6 20 ♘h4+ ♔h5 21 ♖d7 ♘d5 22 ♖xd8! (22 ♘f5 ♖xd7 23 exd7 ♖d8 24 ♘xg7+ ♔h6! is equal) 22...♖xd8 23 ♘f5 ♔g6 24 g4 with an extra pawn, but there is still the question of whether it is enough for a win.

16 ♖ad1!? also looks logical. Now, according to analysis by Zaitsev, bad are both 16...♔f7 (16...♔d8 17 d5) 17 ♕c4+ ♔f8 (17...♘d5? 18 ♘e5+! fxe5 19 dxe5 and wins) 18 d5 with a great advantage, and 16...♖d8 17 ♕c4 c6 (17... ♔f8 18 ♕b4 c6 19 d5! cxd5 20

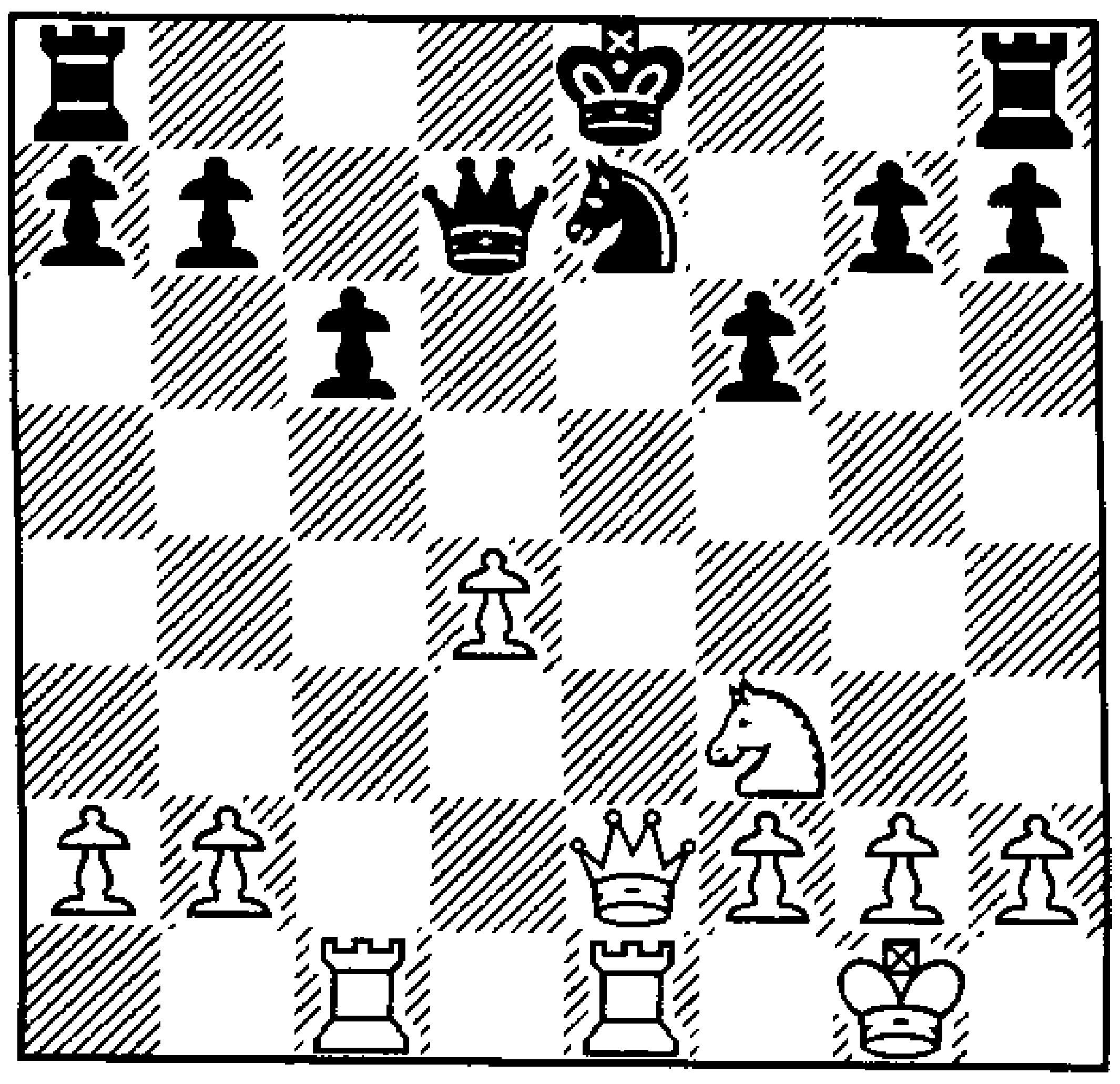
♘d4 ♔f7 21 ♘e6 ♖de8 22 ♕g4 ♘f5 23 ♘xg7 wins) 18 ♖d3 ♔f8 19 ♘g5! fxg5 20 ♖f3+ ♘f5 21 g4 g6 22 gxf5 gxf5 23 ♕c5+ etc. However, after 16...♔f8! 17 d5!? (17 ♕c4 ♘d5! 18 ♘d2 ♔f7 19 ♘e4 ♖he8 and 18 ♖e2 c6 19 ♖de1 ♔f7 are both equal) 17...♘xd5 18 ♘g5! ♖e8 (inferior is 18...fxg5 19 ♕f3+ ♕f7 20 ♕xd5 or 18...c6 19 ♘e6+ ♔g8 20 ♘f4 ♖d8 21 ♕h5 ♕f7 22 ♕f3) 19 ♕f3 c6 20 ♕a3+ ♔g8 21 ♘e4 (21 ♕h3 ♕c8!) 21...b6 22 b4! White has no more than the initiative for the pawn. True, Black has to play very accurately: for example, 22...f5? is bad on account of 23 ♘g5 ♖xe1+ 24 ♖xe1 g6 (24...h6? 25 ♕xa7 wins) 25 b5!



16...c6?

16...♔f7! was essential, not fearing the exchange sacrifice 17 ♕xe7+?! ♕xe7 18 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 19 ♖xc7+ in view of 19... ♔d6 20 ♖xg7 (even worse is 20 ♖xb7? ♖hb8 21 ♖xg7 ♖xb2 22 h3 ♖xa2 23 ♖xh7 a5! etc.) 20...♖ac8! 21 g3 ♖c7, when Black has a good endgame. And if 17 ♕c4+ there is (in contrast to the variation with 16 ♖ad1) the reply 17...♘d5. The immediate knight sacrifice also gives nothing real: 17 ♘e5+ fxe5 18 dxe5 ♕e6 19 ♖xc7 ♖hd8! 20 ♖xb7 ♔g8 or 17 ♘g5+ fxg5 18 ♕f3+ ♘f5! 19 g4 ♖he8 (Neishtadt).

I have tried to find an advantage after 17 ♘d2, but without success: 17...c6 18 ♘e4 b6! (restricting the knight) 19 ♕c4+ ♔g6! 20 ♕d3 (or 20 ♖c3 ♘f5) 20...♔f7 21 ♕b3+ ♘d5 22 ♘c3 ♖ac8 is level.

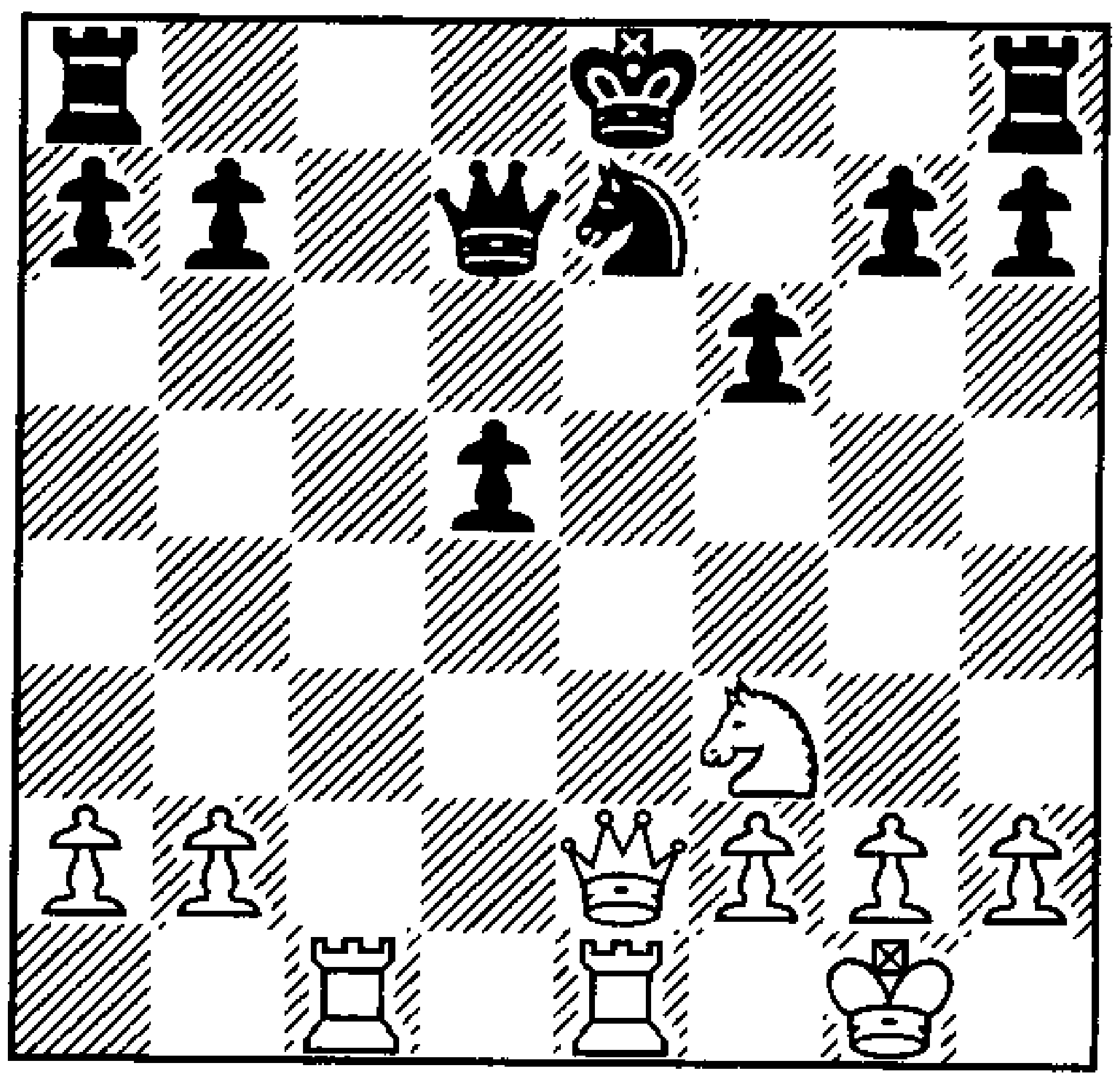


17 d5!!

A classic breakthrough in the centre, strictly in accordance with Steinitz's own theory: the player holding an advantage is obliged to attack! Especially if this wins by force...

17...cxd5

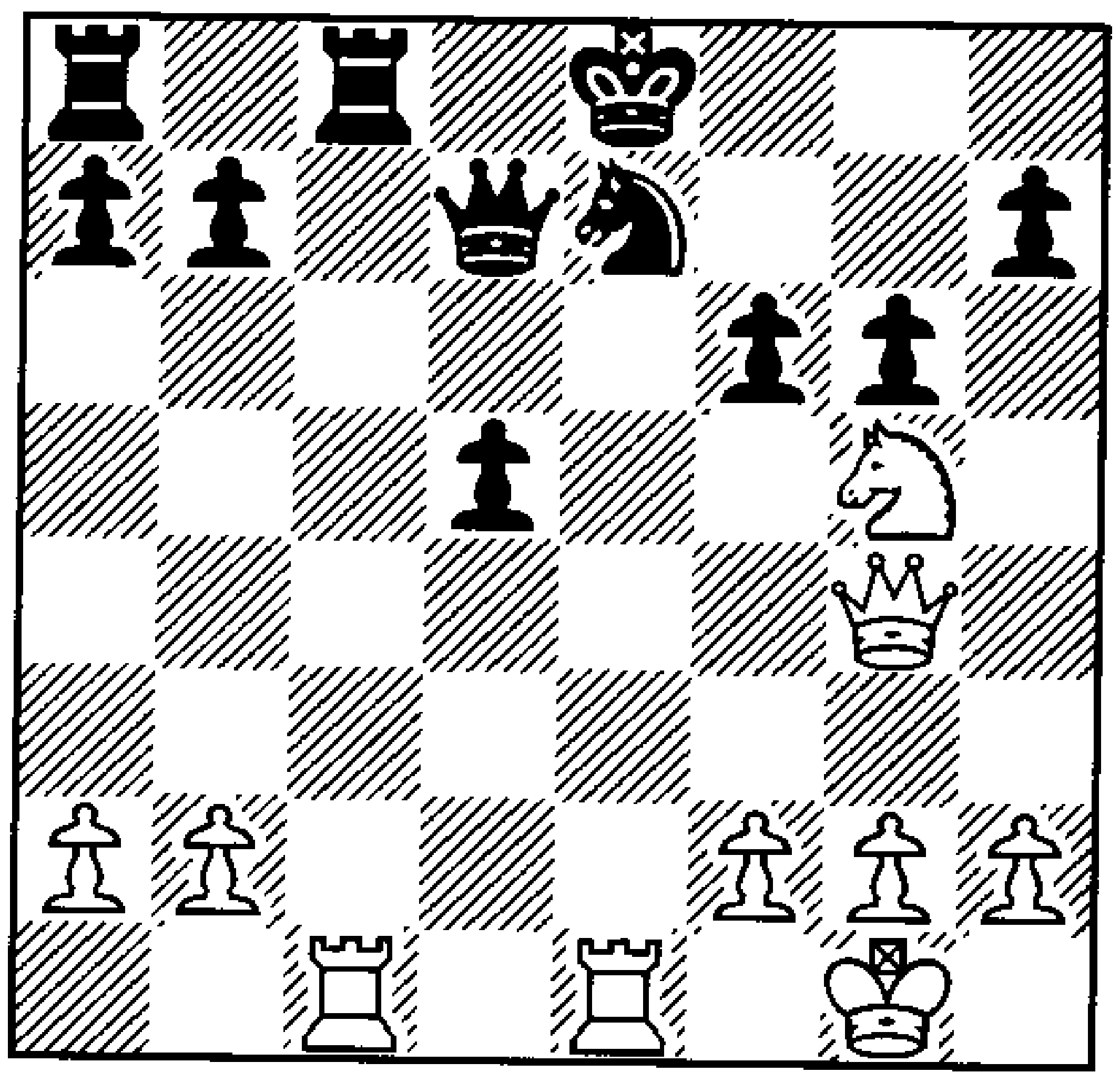
Fortunately for chess, Bardeleben had no suspicion of Steinitz's brilliant idea, otherwise he would surely have played 17...♔f7. However, even here after 18 dxc6 bxc6 (18...♘xc6 19 ♖cd1) 19 ♖ed1 (19 ♕c4+ ♕d5 20 ♕xd5+ cxd5 21 ♖c7 ♖he8 22 ♘d4 is also unpleasant) the computer everywhere indicates 'winning for White': 19...♕e6 20 ♕xe6+ ♔xe6 21 ♘d4+ ♔f7 22 ♘xc6 etc. or 19...♘d5 20 ♘d4 ♖ac8 21 ♕c4 with the unavoidable ♘xc6 (for example, 21...♕g4 22 h3 ♕f4 23 g3 ♕e4 24 ♖e1 ♕g6 25 ♘xc6).



18 ♘d4 ♔f7 19 ♘e6 (with the threat of ♖c7) **19...♖hc8**

Black also fails to save the game by 19...♖ac8 20 ♕g4 g6 21 ♘g5+ ♔e8 22 ♖xc8+ or 19...♘c6 20 ♘c5! ♕f5 (20...♕c8 21 ♕h5+) 21 ♘xb7 ♕d7 22 ♘c5 ♕f5 23 ♘e6 ♖ac8 24 ♕a6 ♘e7 25 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 26 h3 ♖c4 27 f3!

20 ♕g4! g6 21 ♘g5+ ♔e8

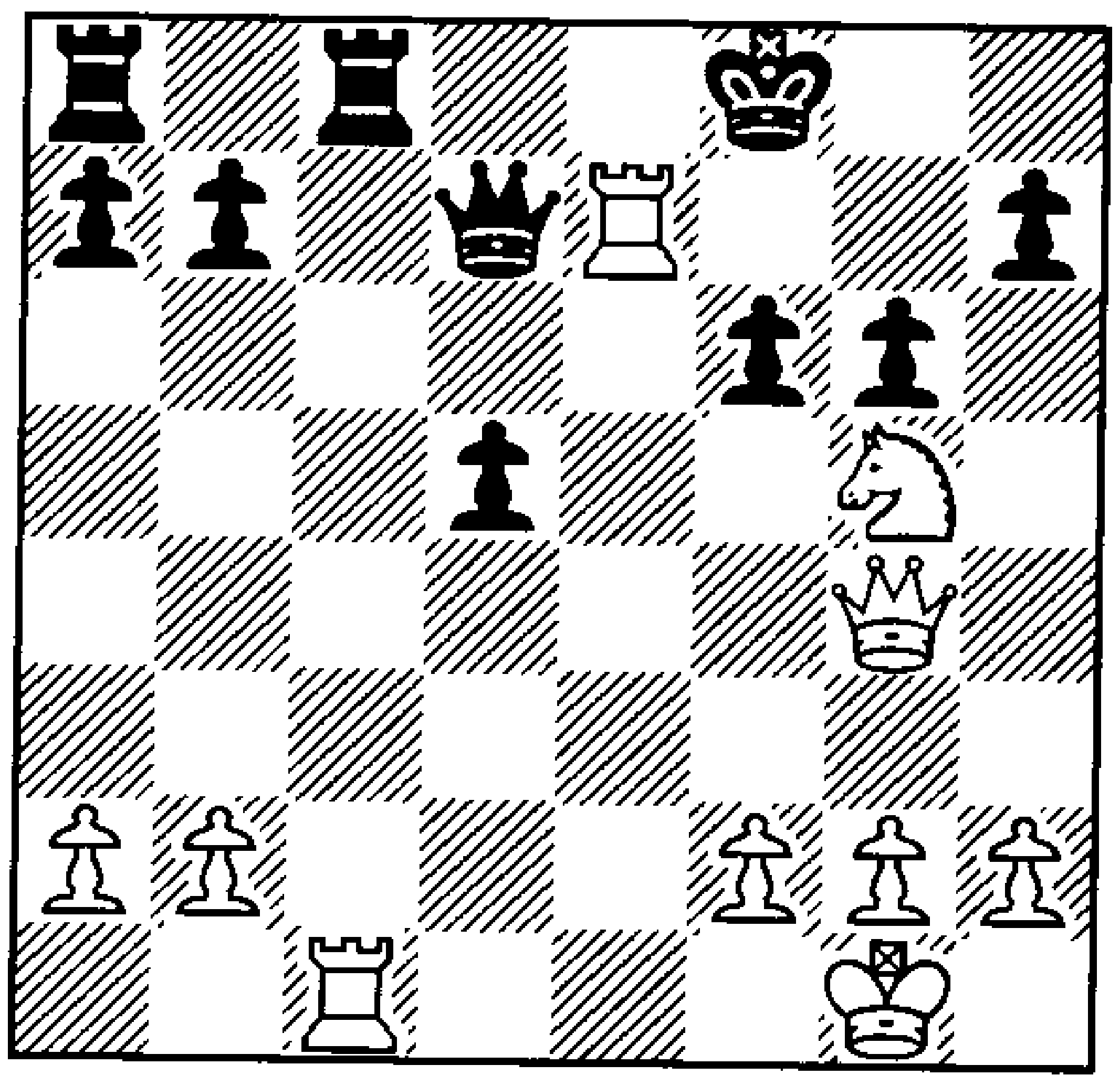


22 ♖xe7+!

An astounding combination!

22...♔f8!

After 22...♔xe7 Steinitz calculated the variation 23 ♖e1+ ♔d6 (23...♔d8 24 ♘e6+ ♔e7 25 ♘c5+) 24 ♕b4+ ♔c7 25 ♘e6+ (or 25 ♖c1+) 25...♔b8 26 ♕f4+ ♖c7 27 ♘xc7 ♕xc7 28 ♖e8 mate, but the computer shows that 23 ♕b4+ would have won more quickly: 23...♔e8 24 ♖e1+ ♔d8 25 ♘e6+ or 23...♕d6 24 ♕xb7+ ♕d7 25 ♖e1+ ♔d6 26 ♘f7+.



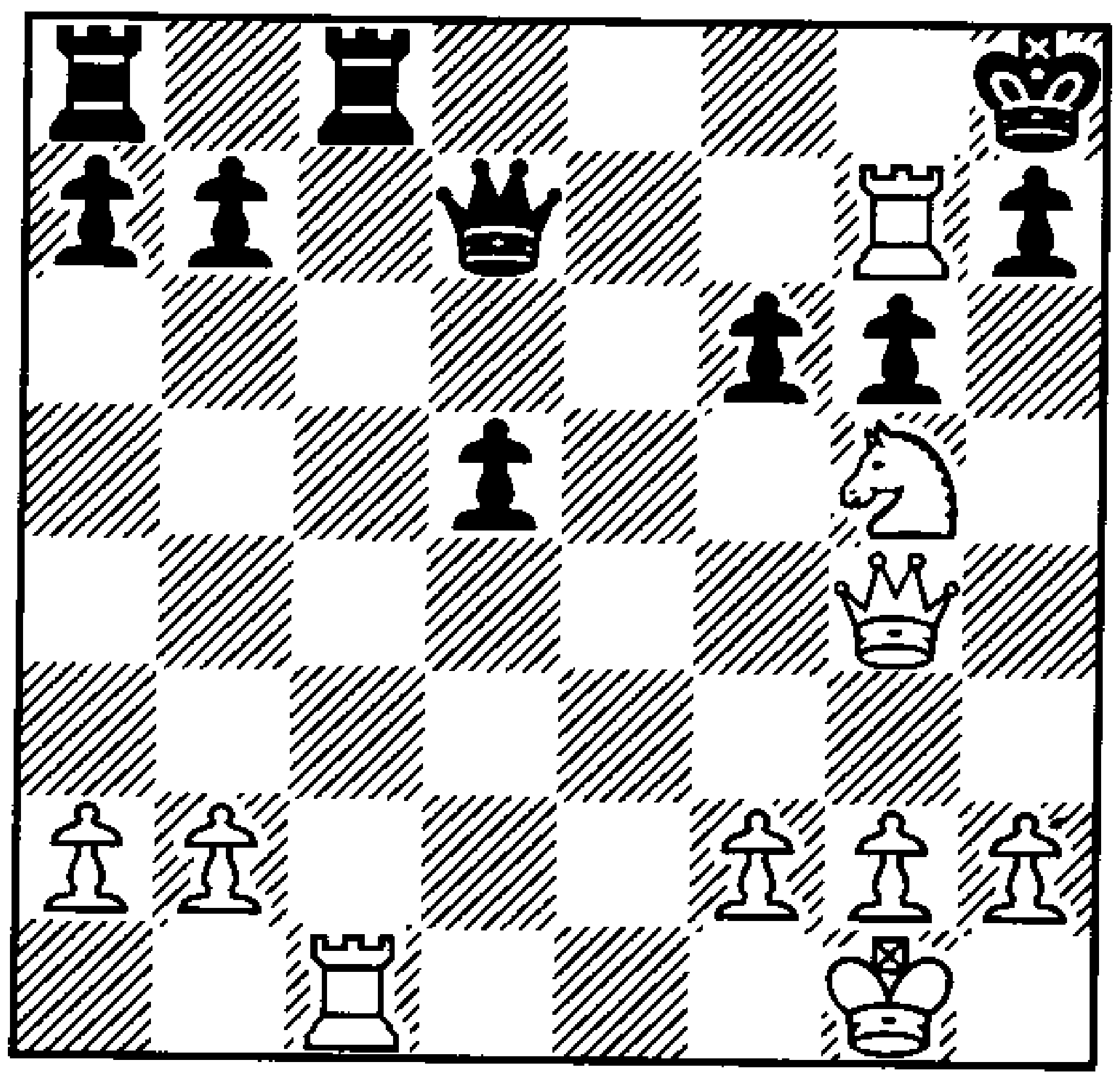
23 ♖f7+!

Of course, not 23 ♕xd7?? ♖xc1+ and not 23 ♖xc8+? – why, we will see in the note to White's 25th move.

23...♔g8! (23...♕xf7 24 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 25 ♕xc8+ ♕e8 26 ♘xh7+ is hopeless for Black)

24 ♖g7+! ♔h8!

Avoiding 24...♔f8 25 ♘xh7+! ♔xg7 26 ♕xd7+.



25 ♖xh7+! 1-0

The final point! More precisely, Bardeleben... suddenly stood up and silently walked out of the room (later he sent a note by special delivery tendering his resignation).

But Steinitz willingly demonstrated to the spectators that which awaited Black: 25...♔g8 26 ♖g7+! ♔h8 27 ♕h4+ ♔xg7 28 ♕h7+ ♔f8 29 ♕h8+ ♔e7 30 ♕g7+ ♔e8 (30...♔d8 31 ♕f8+ ♕e8 32 ♘f7+ and 33 ♕d6 mate; 30...♔d6 31 ♕xf6+, and the rook at c1 prevents the king from escaping onto the c-file) 31 ♕g8+! ♔e7 32 ♕f7+ ♔d8 33 ♕f8+ ♕e8 34 ♘f7+ ♔d7 35 ♕d6 mate.

Here I can't help but recall the elevated words of Hannak, the biographer of the first world champion: 'This was Steinitz's final flash of a dream about his former youth, brilliance, greatness and happiness, when towards the end of a hot day on 17 August 1895 he won the most brilliant game of his life.'

Hastings 1895 designated the five strongest players in the world: 1. Pillsbury – 16½ out of 21 (the sensation of the tournament!); 2. Chigorin – 16; 3. Lasker – 15½; 4. Tarrasch – 14; 5. Steinitz – 13. But which of these was

No.1? For a short time a kind of 'chess republic' was established.

Soon in St Petersburg (1895/96) a six-cycle match-tournament of the four giants was held (alas, Tarrasch declined to play), ending in an unequivocal triumph for Lasker. And yet in one of the games the young champion suffered a bitter disappointment.

Game 34

W.Steinitz-Em.Lasker

St Petersburg 1895/96, 4th cycle

Queen's Gambit D35

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗f4

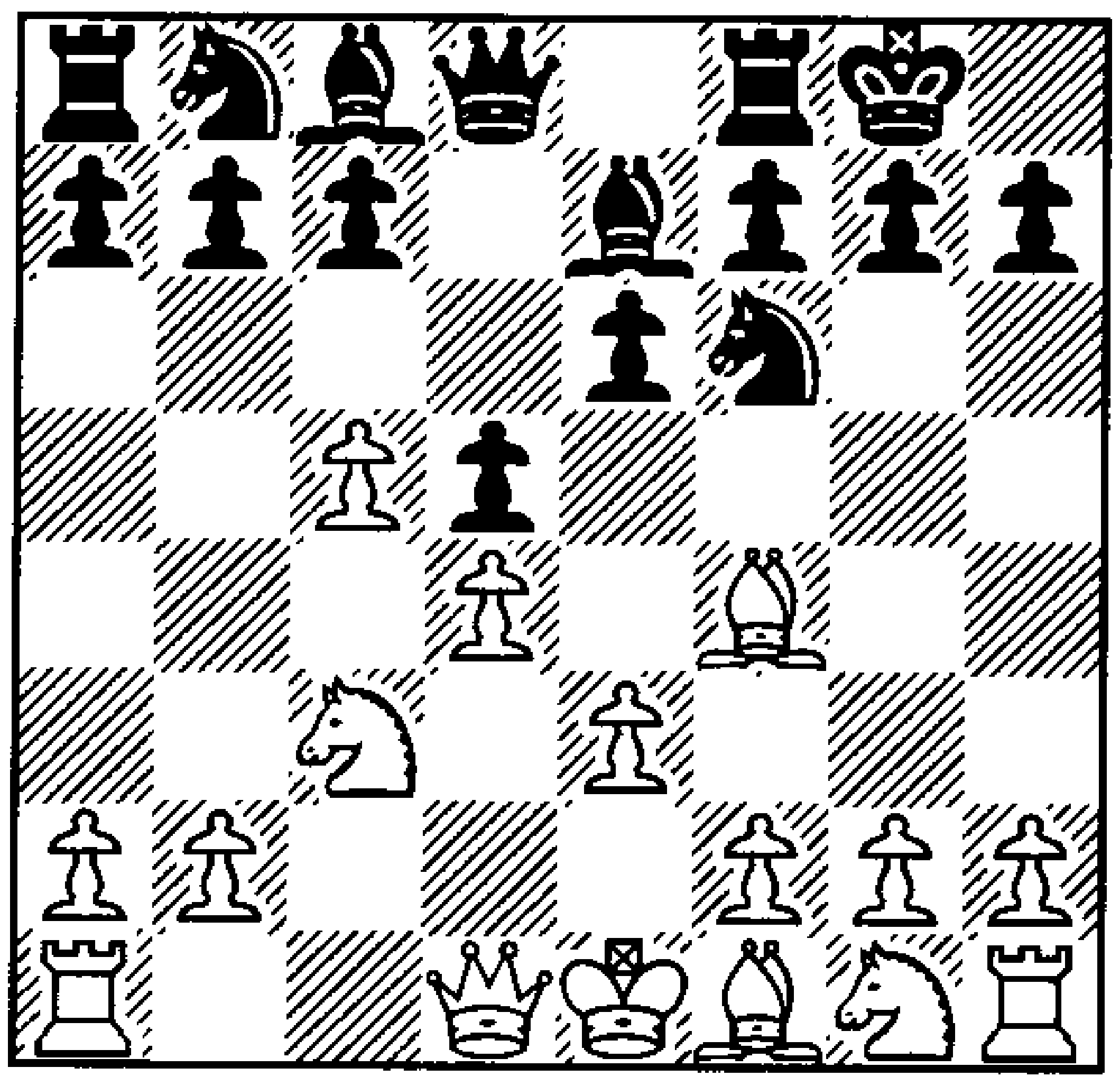
If White does not play 4 ♗g5 (Steinitz-Anderssen, Vienna 1873) or 4 cxd5, he more often first goes 4 ♘f3 and only after 4...♗e7 – 5 ♗f4 0-0 6 e3, for example: 6...c5! 7 dxc5! etc. (Steinitz-Burn, Hastings 1895).

4...♗e7

More energetic is 4...c5!, as Lasker played in the sixth cycle of the St Petersburg Match-Tournament: after 5 e3 (5 ♘b5?! cxd4!) 5...♘c6 (also good is 5...cxd4 6 exd4 dxc4 7 ♗xc4 ♘c6 8 ♘f3 ♗e7 with equality Zukertort-Steinitz, USA 13th matchgame 1886) 6 ♘f3 a6 7 dxc5 ♗xc5 8 cxd5 ♘xd5 9 ♘xd5 exd5 10 ♗d3 ♗b4+ Black has a good game.

5 e3 0-0 6 c5!?

In the second cycle 6 ♖c1 c5 7 dxc5 ♗xc5 8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♘f3 ♘c6 10 ♗d3 d4 11 exd4 ♘xd4 with a level game was tried.



6...♘e4?!

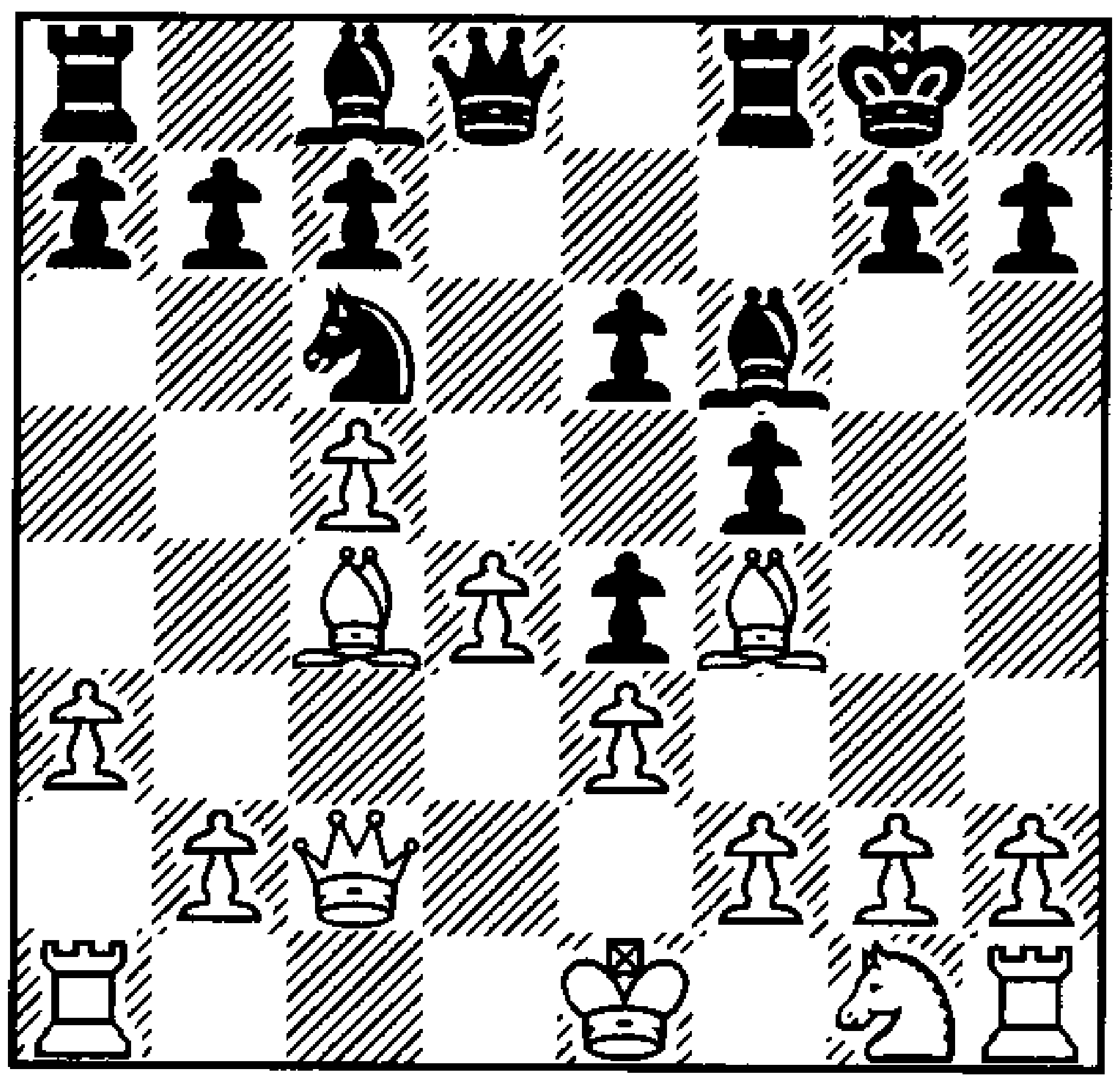
Even the great Lasker underestimated the danger of the bind on Black's queenside: the attempt to gain counterplay in the centre proves advantageous to his opponent.

The correct way for Black was only found nearly a century later: 6...b6! 7 b4 a5 8 a3 axb4 9 axb4 ♖xa1 10 ♕xa1 ♘c6 11 ♕a4 bxc5!! 12 ♕xc6? (12 bxc5 ♗d7 13 ♗b5 ♕a8 is equal) 12...cxd4! 13 ♘a2 (or 13 exd4 ♗xb4 with a powerful initiative) 13...♗d7 14 ♕a6 dxe3 15 fxe3 c6 16 ♘e2 ♘e4 17 ♘g3 ♘d6 18 ♗d3 ♕a8 19 ♕xa8 ♖xa8 20 ♘c3 ♘e8 with a great advantage (Lerner-Geller, 52nd USSR Championship, Riga 1985).

7 ♘xe4! (but not 7 ♗d3?! ♘xc3 8 bxc3 b6! equalising) **7...dxe4 8 ♕c2 f5 9 ♗c4**

The weakness of the e6-pawn is exposed.

9...♘c6 10 a3 (preventing ...♘b4-d5 and vacating the a2-square for the bishop in the event of ...Nc6-a5) **10...♗f6**



11 0-0-0!

A concrete decision: realising that a pawn offensive on the queenside will be countered by ...e6-e5, Steinitz changes plan. Now White intends to attack the weakened enemy centre (f2-f3!), and potentially also the kingside.

11...♔h8

'This and the next move prepare ...e6-e5: only in this way is it possible to undertake anything against f2-f3.' (Romanovsky). And indeed, 11...♘e7 (11...b6? 12 d5!) 12 f3! ♘d5?! 13 fxe4 ♘xf4 14 exf4 is unfavourable for

Black.

12 f3 ♕e7?!

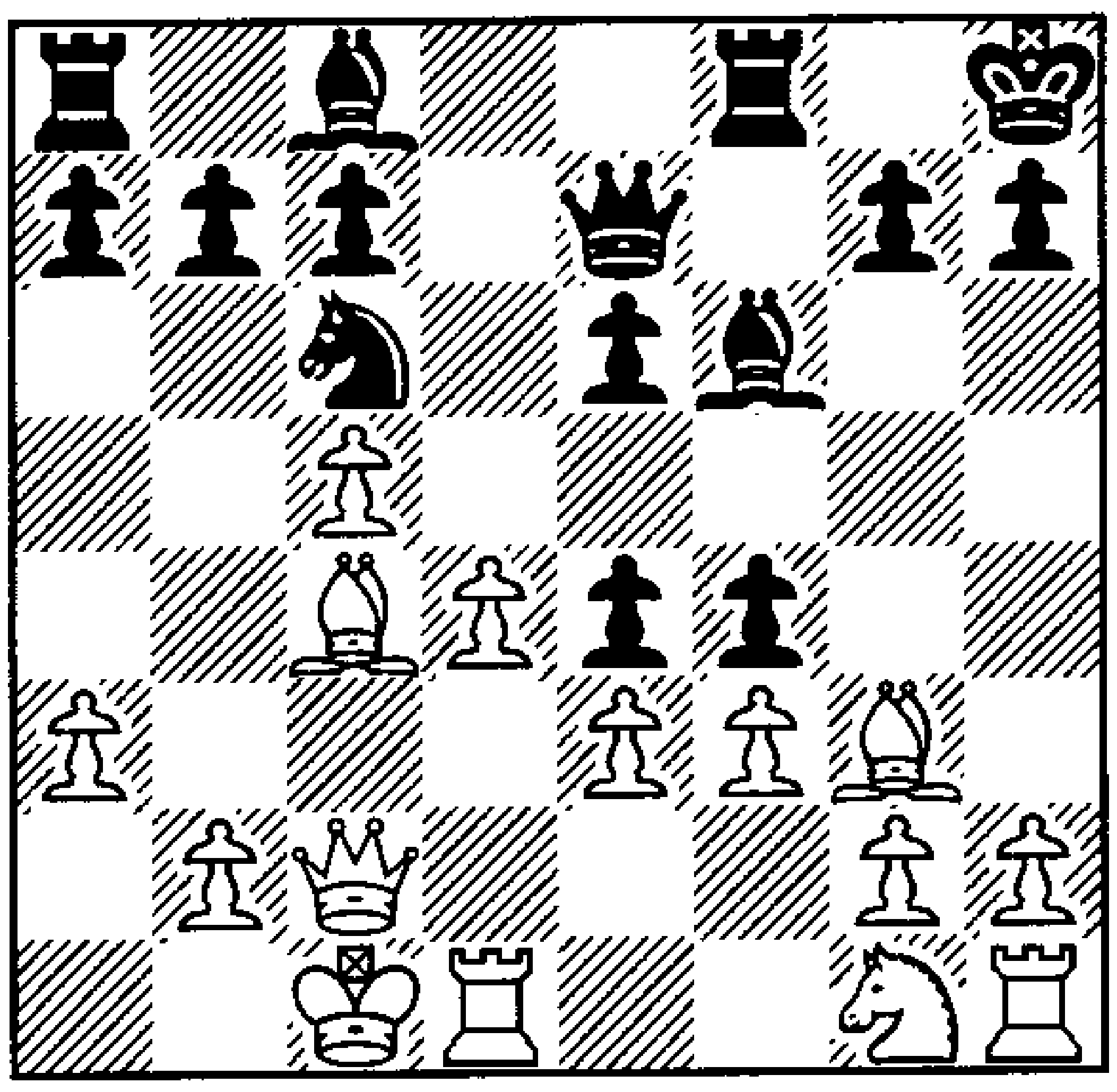
Black hurries to play ...e6-e5, not being satisfied with 12...exf3 13 ♘xf3 ♕e7.

13 ♗g3!

The acceptance of the pawn sacrifice – 13 fxe4? would have handed the initiative to Black: 13...e5! 14 d5 exf4 15 dxc6 ♕xc5 or 14 dxe5 ♘xe5.

13...f4?!

Very typical of Lasker: on getting into dubious positions, he would launch into a mass of complications – and in this way he won numerous interesting, fighting games. But that day Steinitz was irresistible!



14 ♕xe4!!

A surprise: a pretty, purely positional piece sacrifice. Black's calculation was based on the 'natural' 14 ♗xf4? e5 15 dxe5 ♘xe5 16 ♕xe4? ♗f5! 17 ♕xf5 ♘xc4 winning.

14...fxg3 15 hxg3

White has only two pawns for the bishop, but his initiative is inextinguishable.

15...g6?!

Lasker gives up a third pawn, hoping to use the g-file for defence. If 15...h6, then 16 ♗d3 or 16 f4 ♗d7 17 ♘f3 and g3-g4. 15...g5 suggested itself, when Steinitz said that he was intending 16 f4 g4 17 ♘e2 ♗d7 18 ♕c2 followed by e3-e4-e5, and if possible the doubling of rooks on the h-file. It would not have been easy for Black to withstand the mounting pressure.

16 ♕xg6 ♗d7

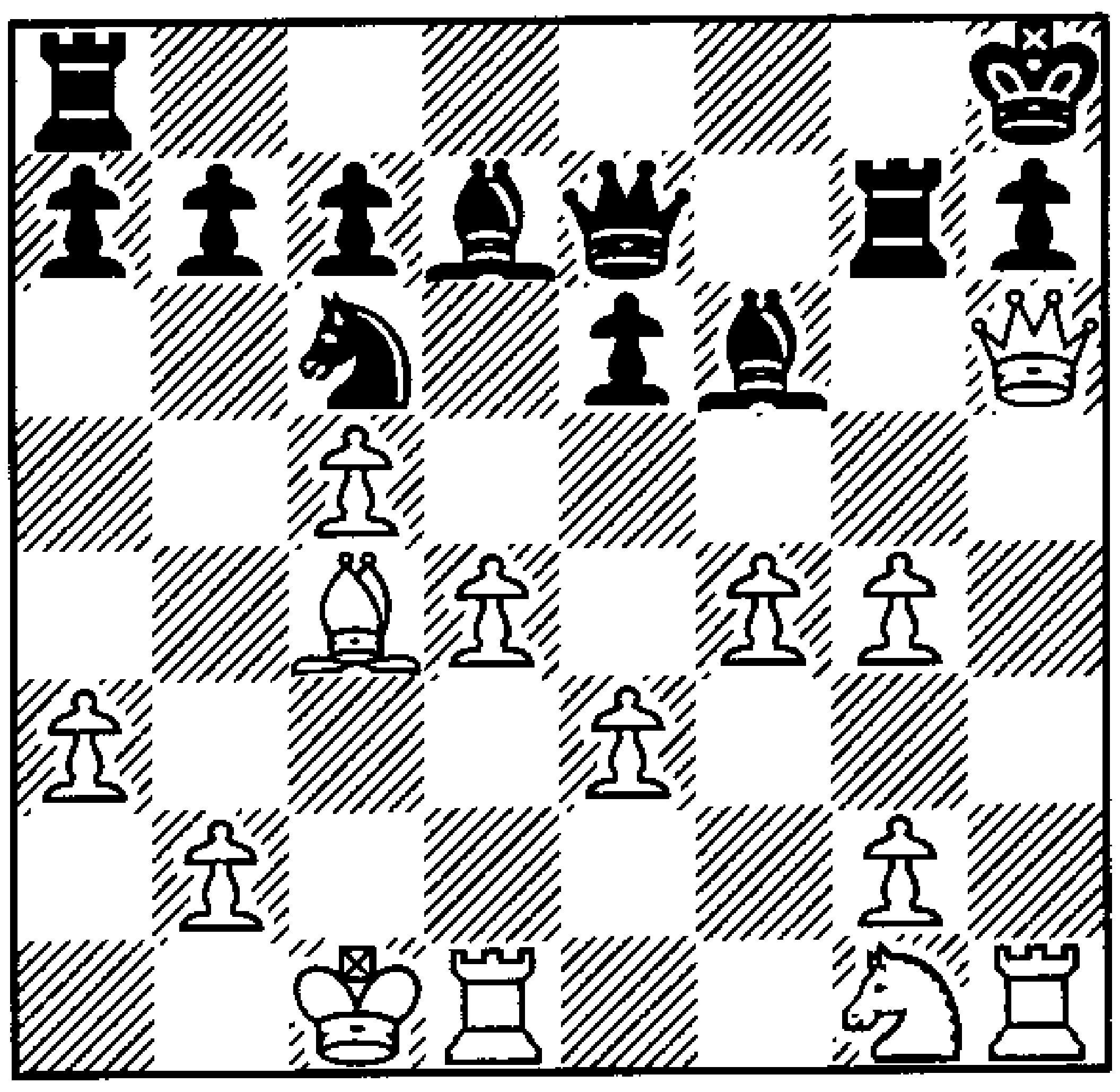
16...e5? 17 d5! is bad for Black, while the greedy 16...♖g8 17 ♕e4 ♖xg3?! would merely have helped the white knight join the attack: 18 ♘e2 ♖g7 19 ♘f4.

17 f4 ♖f7?

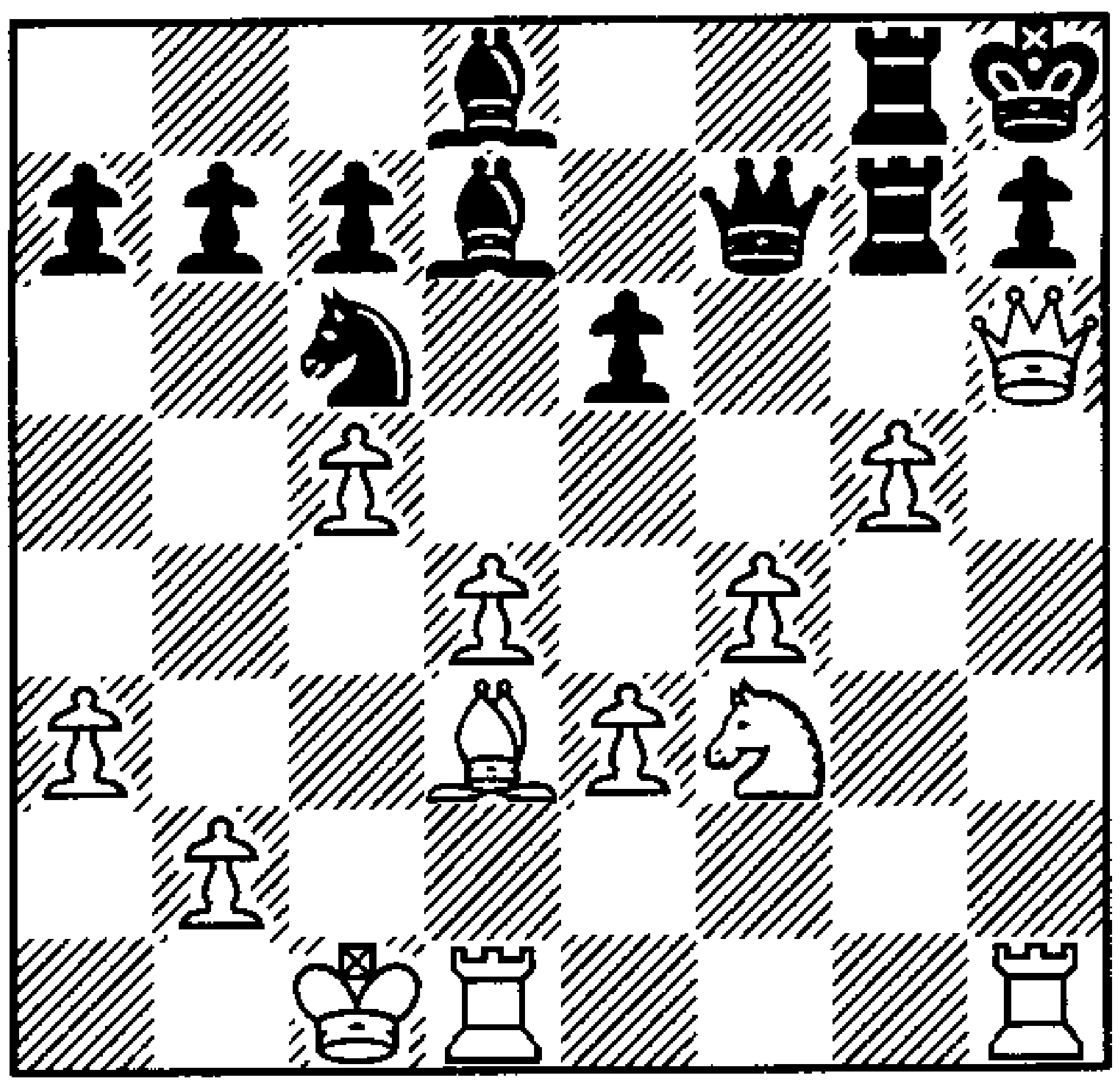
Now Black is doomed. 17...♖g8 was more tenacious, although after 18 ♕e4 ♖xg3 19 ♘e2 ♖g7 20 ♖h6 and ♖dh1 White's pressure would have remained highly unpleasant.

18 g4 ♖g7 (if 18...♖g8, then 19 ♕h5 and g4-g5) **19 ♕h6!**

The inaccurate 19 ♕h5? would have allowed Black to defend by ...♗e8-g6.



19...♖xg4 20 ♗d3 ♖g7 (also bad is 20...♖h4 21 ♖xh4 ♗xh4 22 ♘f3 ♗f2 23 ♖h1 ♗e3 24 ♔b1) **21 ♘f3 ♕f7 22 g4!** (the attack develops of its own accord) **22...♖ag8 23 g5 ♗d8**



24 ♖h2!

This is far stronger than 24 g6?! ♖xg6! After ♖dh1 a catastrophe on h7 is unavoidable.

24...♖g6 25 ♕h5! ♖6g7 26 ♖dh1! ♕xh5 27 ♖xh5 ♖f8 28 ♖xh7+ ♖xh7

If 28...♔g8, then 29 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 30 ♖h7+.

29 ♖xh7+ ♔g8 30 ♖xd7 ♖f7 31 ♗c4! 1-0

Just before the curtain – a little 'stroke of genius': Black resigned in view of 31...♖xd7 32 ♗xe6+ ♖f7 33 g6.

The fighting spirit and energy demonstrated by Steinitz, who was only half well and already a long way from his best days, both in this game and throughout the St Petersburg match-tournament, provoke enormous admiration.

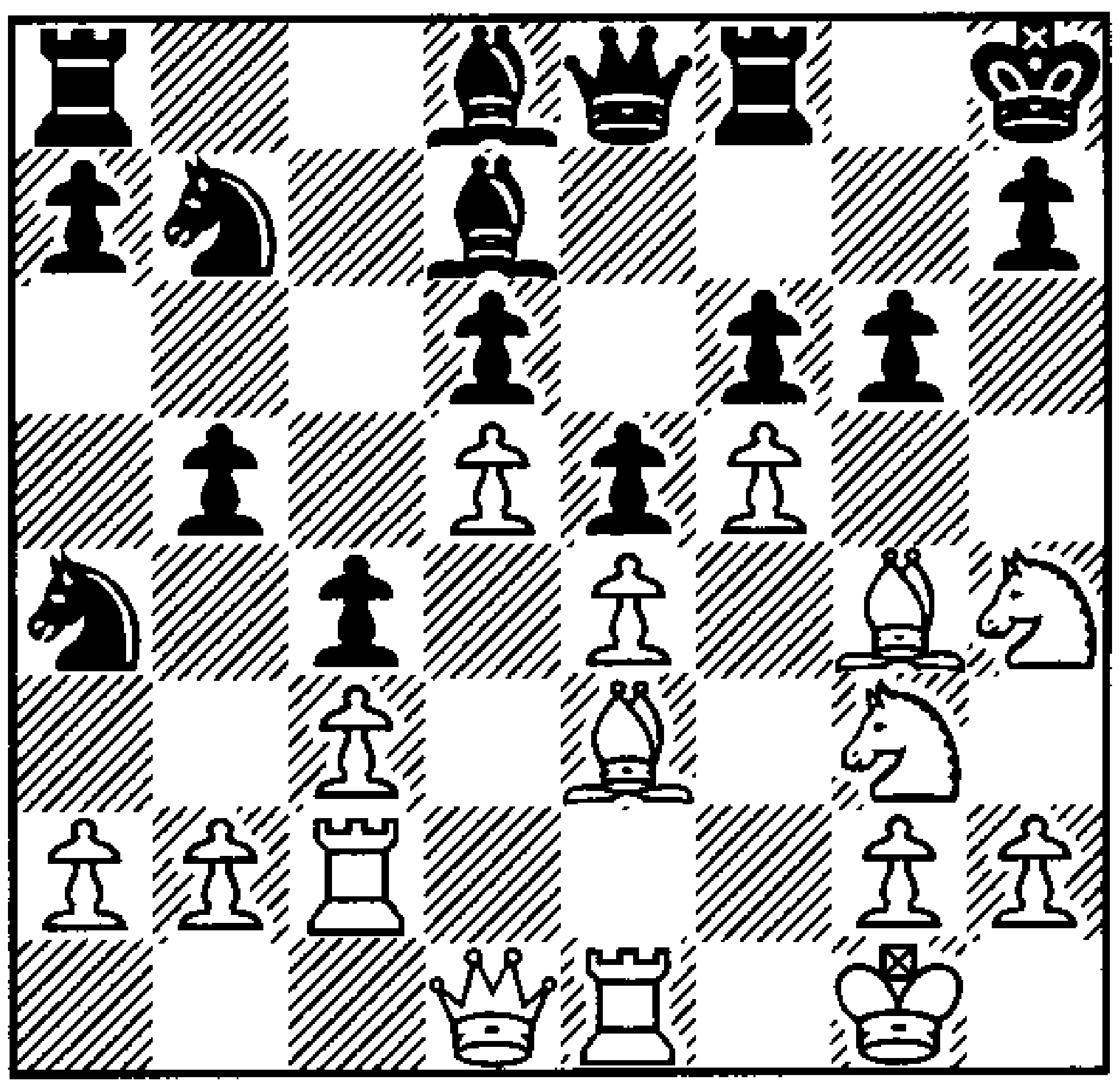
A year later in Moscow (1896/97) the former champion lost to Lasker in the first return match in history, beginning with four successive defeats. This, however, did not prevent him from writing and sending a congratulatory letter to his long-standing opponent Chigorin, who had just won the international tournament in Budapest:

> *'My dear friend and deeply-respected colleague! Please accept my most hearty congratulations regarding your glorious victory in Budapest. Admirers of our noble art will be sincerely gladdened by the fact that the winner was a representative of Russia, which in recent times has done so much for chess, thanks mainly to your genius and authority.*
>
> *Allow me to assure you, on behalf of all the chess-players I know, that I wish you the greatest success in the future.*
>
> *With best wishes, W. Steinitz.'*

I somehow don't recall such letters in the severe 20th century... And this for all the difficult, unsociable, even quarrelsome character of the first champion! 'He had arguments wherever he settled,' writes Znosko-Borovsky. 'Cheerful, pleasant and witty though he was on short visits, a lover of cheerful anecdotes, capable of citing lengthy verses which he had never learned by heart, but only read a couple of times, an admirer of Wagner's music, to which he could listen for hours – he was a difficult person in the place where he settled. He did, said and wrote what he considered necessary or correct, completely ignoring the repercussions that would result, or the response it would provoke. Within a few years of arriving in America he could hardly find a town that was willing to invite him to give a simultaneous display. This is understandable: one of his first actions in American was to subject Morphy, the American genius, to a destructive criticism.'

During the Moscow return match Steinitz began to experience serious health problems – later he even spent almost a whole month in a clinic. But even in such very difficult conditions, playing a young and very strong opponent, the old maestro was sometimes able to create genuine strategic masterpieces.

Game 35
Em.Lasker-W.Steinitz
Return match,
Moscow 1896/97, 8th game



23...g5!

Delaying White's attack and intending the long-planned invasion of a knight at d3. The immediate 23...♘bc5? is bad in view of 24 fxg6 hxg6 25 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 26 ♕g4 ♖g8 27

♘hf5! winning.

24 ♘f3 ♘bc5 25 h4!?

'Opening lines to strengthen the attack. After 25 ♖ee2 ♘d3 White would have had to counter the possible combination 26...♘dxb2 27 ♖xb2 ♘xc3, for example: 26 ♖ed2 ♗a5 27 ♗h5 ♕e7 28 ♘e2 (defending the c3-pawn in the event of ...♘xb2) or 26 ♕a1 ♗a5 27 b4 ♗b6 28 ♗xb6 ♘xb6 29 ♘e1 ♘f4 and 30...a5, in both variations with a difficult game for White.' (Euwe)

25...gxh4 26 ♘xh4 ♘d3 27 ♖f1

A practically forced pawn sacrifice. If 27 ♖ee2, then strong is 27...♖g8! (27...♘dxb2 28 ♖xb2 ♘xc3 is not so clear) 28 ♗h5 (28 ♖ed2 ♗b6) 28...♕f8 29 ♘f1 ♗b6! 30 ♗xb6 axb6 followed by ...♕h6 or ...♘f4.

27...♘axb2 (27...♖g8?! 28 b4) **28 ♕f3 ♗b6 29 ♔h2 ♖g8!?**

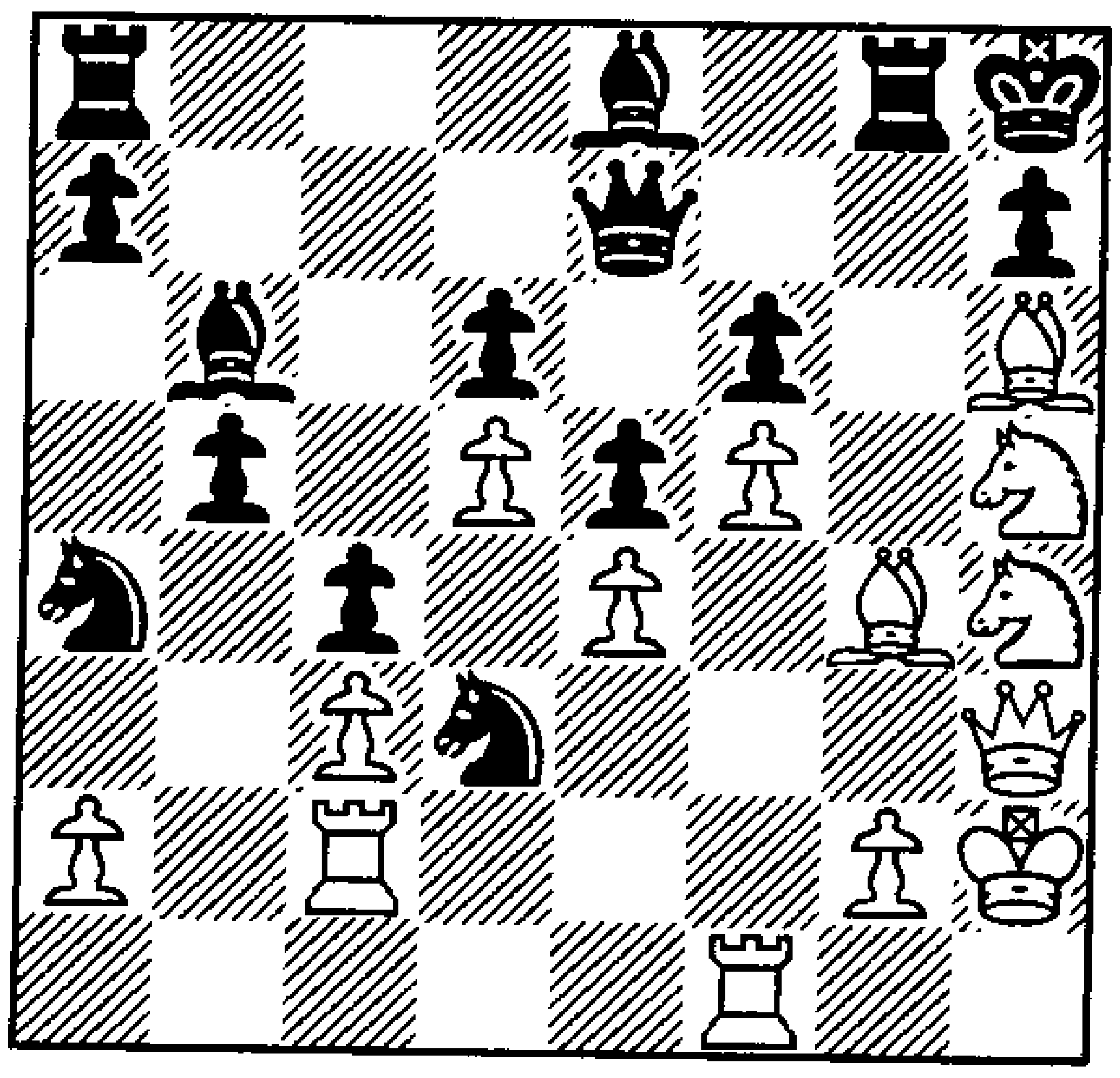
'Black could have exchanged bishops (29...♗xe3), but he does not hurry with his exchange, since after the bishop moves from e3 his bishop at b6 will prevent the attacking manoeuvre ♖h1 and ♔g1.' (Euwe)

30 ♗h6 ♕e7 31 ♘h5 (apparently, preparing a combination...) **31...♗e8!**

A highly important link in the defence!

32 ♕h3 (or 32 ♘g3 ♘a4 33 ♗h5 ♗a5 34 ♘e2 ♘ac5 etc.) **32...♘a4**

A highly picturesque position has arisen: where else have you seen so many pieces on the h-file?!



33 ♗f3?!

Retreat! Many commentators were puzzled why Lasker did not play 33 ♘g6+!? The computer solves this problem in a matter of minutes: 33...♗xg6! (of course, not 33...hxg6? 34 ♘xf6! ♖g7 35 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 36 ♕h7+ ♔xf6 37 fxg6+ ♘f4 38 ♕h4+) 34 fxg6 ♖xg6 35 ♘xf6 (35 ♖xf6? ♖xf6 36 ♗g5 ♘f4!) 35...♖xf6! 36 ♗g5 ♖af8 (more modest is 36...♖xf1 37 ♗xe7 ♗g1+ 38 ♔h1 – 38 ♔g3?! ♖g8! – 38...♗f2+ with perpetual check) 37 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 38 ♗f5 ♔g8 39 ♕h4 (or immediately 39 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 40 ♕xh7+ ♔f8) 39...♗d8 40 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 41 ♕xh7+ ♔f8, and together with the extra material Black retains winning chances.

33...♘ac5 (33...♗a5!?) **34 ♖e2**

And again Lasker rejects 34 ♘g6+!? ♗xg6 35 fxg6, possibly not seeing anything good for himself after 35...♖xg6 36 ♘g3 ♖ag8 37 ♘f5 ♕d7 38 ♗h5 ♘xe4! 39 ♗xg6 ♖xg6 40 ♗e3 ♗a5.

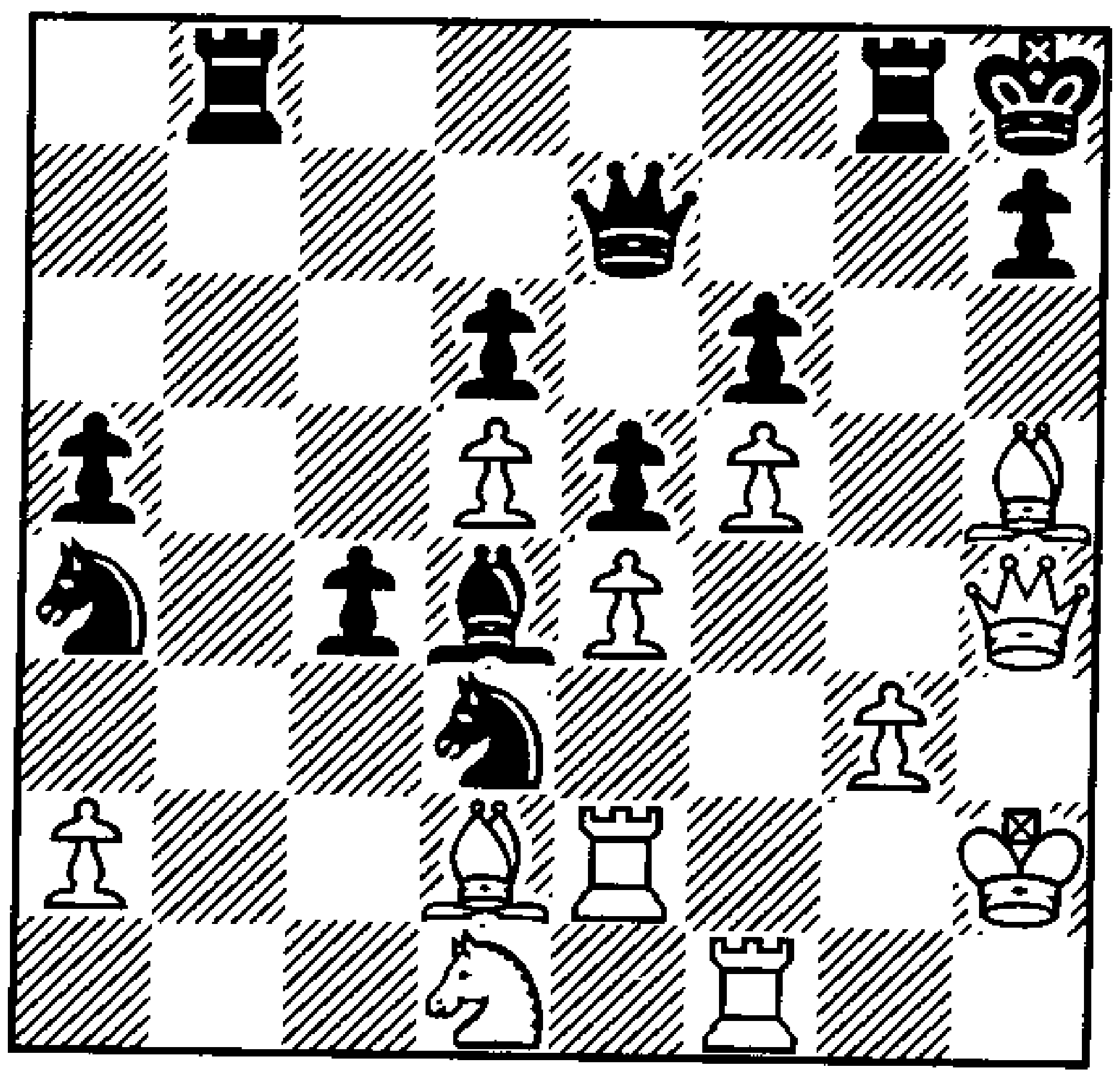
34...♘d7 (34...♗a5 wins) **35 g3 a5** (now things become very bad for White) **36 ♘g2 b4 37 ♘e3 ♖c8**

Simpler was 37...♗xe3 winning.

38 ♘d1 (38 cxb4 axb4 39 ♖c2 c3! etc.) **38...bxc3**

'38...b3 and ...♘7c5 was even stronger.' (Euwe)

39 ♘xc3 ♗d4 40 ♗d2 (40 ♘d1 ♗f7) **40...♘7c5** (40...♖b8!?) **41 ♕h4 ♗xh5 42 ♗xh5 ♖b8 43 ♘d1 ♘a4**



With the threat of ...c4-c3. 43...♖b1!? was also good.

44 ♗xa5 ♖a8 45 ♗d2

Or 45 ♗e1 ♘xe1 46 ♖fxe1 c3 47 ♖c2 ♘b2 48 ♘xc3?! ♖gc8 49 ♖xb2 (49 ♖ec1? ♘d3) 49...♗xc3 50 ♖ee2 ♗xb2 51 ♖xb2 ♖cb8 52 ♖c2 ♖b4 and Black wins.

45...c3 46 ♗xc3!?

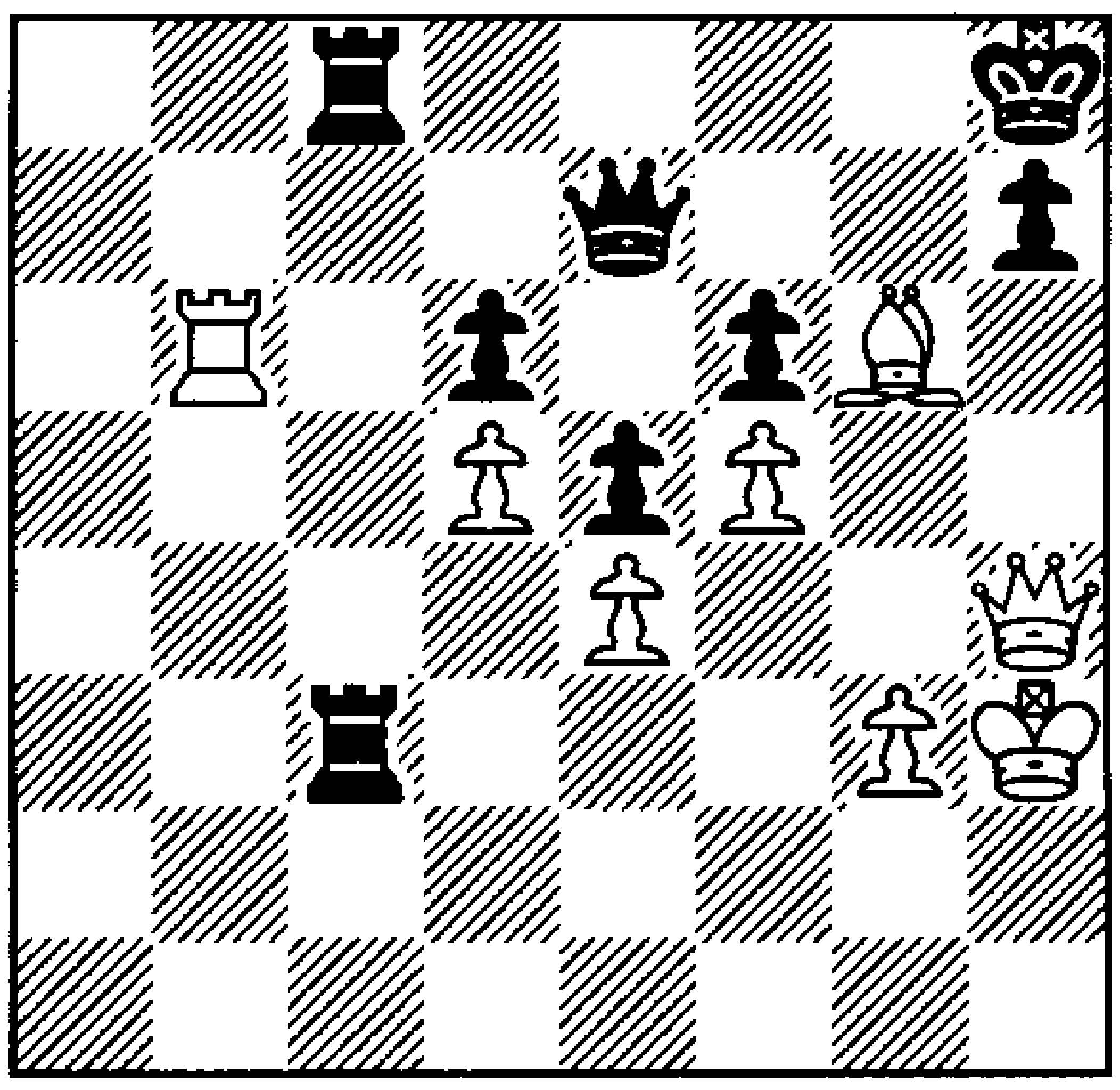
A desperate chance. If 46 ♗h6 Black has a pleasant choice between 46...♘ab2 47 ♘e3 ♗xe3 48 ♗xe3 ♖xa2 and 46...♖gc8 47 ♘e3 ♗xe3 48 ♗xe3 c2.

46...♘xc3 47 ♘xc3 ♗xc3 48 ♖f3 ♘c1 49 ♖c2 ♘xa2 50 ♖fxc3 ♘xc3 51 ♖xc3 ♖gc8

Chigorin recommended 51...♖g5!? 52 ♗f3 (or 52 g4 ♖a2+ 53 ♔h3 ♕a7 54 ♗g6 ♖a3 55 ♖xa3 ♕xa3+ 56 ♔g2 ♕a7 and wins) 52...♖a2+ (52...♔g7!?) 53 ♔h3 ♔g7 54 g4 h5 55 gxh5 ♕a7 56 ♕e1 (56 h6+ ♔h7) 56...♕f2 57 ♕xf2 ♖xf2 58 ♗d1 ♖f1 59 ♗f3 ♔h6 followed by ...♖gg1 and ...♔g5-f4.

52 ♖b3!? ♖a2+ 53 ♔h3 ♖ac2 (53...♖a1 wins, but not 53...♖cc2?! 54 ♖b8+ ♔g7 55 ♗e2! with a draw) **54 ♖b6** (a last attempt to confuse matters) **54...♖2c3 55 ♗g6**

With the threat of ♖xd6.



55...♖d8?

The result of fatigue: Black would have won easily by both 55...♖3c7 and 55...♖c1! 56 ♔g2 ♖8c2+ 57 ♔f3 ♖c3+ 58 ♔g4 ♖c4 59 ♖b8+ ♖c8.

56 ♖b7! ½-½

A draw was agreed in view of 56...♕xb7 (56...♖c7? 57 ♖xc7 ♕xc7 58 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 59 ♗f7+!) 57 ♕xf6+ ♕g7 (57...♔g8? 58 ♕xd8+ ♔g7 59 ♗h5!? ♖c8 60 f6+ ♔h6 61 ♕xd6 etc.) 58 ♕xd8+ ♕g8 59 ♕f6+ with perpetual check.

At the return match Steinitz more than worthily explained his bad play in the press: 'Why am I losing so ignominiously? Mainly because Lasker is the greatest player that I have ever met, perhaps the best of all who have ever existed... I simply cannot now withstand a struggle with a top-class master. A chess player has no right to be ill, just like a commander on the battlefield.'

His last heroic deed was winning fourth prize in the Vienna 1898 marathon, but Steinitz's powers rapidly deserted him. At the end of the century he took part in his last tournament (London 1899), and although for the first time in his career he did not win a prize, at the finish he won a game – against Janowski, which was to be the last in his life.

The great master ended his days on the very threshold of the 20th century, in poverty, in a mental asylum on Ward's Island, not far from New York. He went there by boat, clutching to his chest a small chess board; he imagined that he produced an electric current, moving his pieces and striking down his opponents. He longed to play both with Lasker, and with God Himself – and he was sure that he would win...

A fitting inscription on his gravestone would have been the words of Chigorin: 'This was undoubtedly a chess genius, one of the greatest who has ever lived. And, which I respect in him most of all, he rated chess highly as an art. The struggle with him at the chess board forced me to endure both minutes of intense pleasure, and periods of despondency.'

In his declining years Steinitz once said about himself: 'I am not a chess historian – I myself am a piece of chess history, which no one can avoid. I will not write about myself, but I am sure that someone will write...' They did indeed write about him, many did. The most prominent proponents of his ideas were Tarrasch, Lasker and, somewhat later, Euwe. From his school there emerged Pillsbury, Schlechter, Maróczy, Rubinstein, Capablanca... And Alekhine too, by his own admission, learned more from Steinitz than from any other masters of the past.

Of course, much water has flowed under the bridge since then, and much has changed in the approach to chess. Thus, with the improvement in defensive technique it has become extremely difficult to gain an advantage without risk, and one is obliged to fight for the initiative by other, ultra-active and sometimes risky means, even at the cost of weakening one's own position, which would hardly have gladdened Steinitz. However, when defence has been brought to perfection, there is no other way.

And again I should like to conclude this chapter with some notable opinions of the chess kings.

Steinitz: 'Chess is not for the faint-hearted; it absorbs a person entirely. To get to the bottom of this game, he has to give himself up into slavery. Chess is difficult, it demands work, serious reflection and zealous research. Only honest, impartial criticism leads to the goal. Unfortunately, many regard the critic as an enemy, instead of seeing in him a guide to the truth...'

Lasker: 'Steinitz was a thinker worthy of a seat in the halls of a University. A player, as the world believed he was, he was *not*; his studious temperament made that impossible; and thus he was conquered by a player and in the end little valued by the world, he died.'

Capablanca: 'It was Steinitz who was the first to establish the basic principles of general chess strategy. He was a pioneer and one of the most profound researchers into the truth of the game, which was hidden from his contemporaries.'

Alekhine: 'That which Steinitz gave to the theoretical aspect of the game when he was at his best is very remote to all our home-bred chess philosophers, but with his views on Morphy, whom he tries to discredit completely, it is of course impossible to agree.'

Fischer: 'Steinitz's book knowledge didn't compare with Morphy's, and – where Morphy was usually content to play a book line in the opening – Steinitz was always looking for some completely original line. He understood more about the use of squares than did Morphy, and contributed a great deal more to chess theory.'

Petrosian: 'The significance of Steinitz's teaching is that he showed that in principle chess has a strictly-defined, logical nature.'

CHAPTER THREE

Emanuel the Second

The second world champion Emanuel Lasker (24 December 1868 – 11 January 1941) held the crown for longer than anyone – 27 years, and it is unlikely that this record will ever be surpassed. He was a man of broad education, a doctor of philosophy and mathematics, and an author of scientific works and books, including his famous *Manual of Chess*, and even historical philosophical dramas.

Wisdom, a mighty intellect, deep belief in himself, in his common sense, and, of course, his enormous natural gift for chess enabled Lasker to compete successfully with the strongest players in the world almost to the age of 68! Before him history knew of no such examples, and in subsequent years only the names of Smyslov and Korchnoi come to mind...

Lasker was, along with Tarrasch, a direct follower of Steinitz's positional theory. But, while understanding amazingly deeply the laws of the chess struggle, he went further. Botvinnik expresses this well:

'It is staggering that, over such a lengthy and brilliant chess career, in general Lasker played little... This indicates that he was not only a player, but also a chess researcher. When he was not playing, he was thinking (not all the great masters are capable of this), he prepared for tournaments and achieved success. Lasker was perhaps the first of the great masters who understood the importance of preparing for competitions; before him, of course, they studied chess, but only in general, and they were not yet able to prepare concretely (directly for a given tournament)... Lasker's preparation was assisted by his chess universality. He did not have "tastes", he did not have a "style", he did everything equally strongly, equally well – in defence and attack, in quiet positions and wild complications, in the middlegame and the endgame. Therefore the main aim of his preparation was to study the features of his opponent's style. Lasker always endeavoured to create a situation on the board in which his opponent would feel uncertain... He knew his opponents to perfection, their virtues and weaknesses. Lasker was a great psychologist...'

Lasker spoke out for chess professionalism and for 'the uniting of the chess world into an effective organisation' (like FIDE or the GMA). He suggested giving masters the copyright on the texts of games they had played, seeing in this the material basis of professionalism; however, nowadays this idea, which has been fervently upheld by grandmaster Sveshnikov, is hardly realisable...

Chess or Mathematics?

Lasker was born in the small town of Berlinchen, not far from the then Prussian-Russian border, into the poor family of a cantor in the local synagogue. At the age of 12, the boy, who showed unusual ability in mathematics, was sent to a school in Berlin, under the care of his elder brother Berthold – a student in the medical faculty. It was he who taught Emanuel to play chess, presented him with a chess book, and began taking him to a café where he earned a little money by playing for stakes.

The boy was so captivated by the game that his parents ordered Berthold to transfer him to another school. However (oh, Providence!) its head and mathematics teacher turned out to be... the president and champion of the local chess club! And, fortunately, chess went hand in hand with mathematics right to the end of his schooling in 1888. Lasker entered the mathematics faculty of Berlin University and, like his elder brother, he helped to earn his living by playing for stakes (was it from this that he acquired his long-standing habit of playing every game with full intensity, as though it was the most important in his life?).

He finished his first tournament in the Kaiserhof Café with a 100% score, and soon he also won a secondary tournament at the Sixth Congress of the German Chess Union (Breslau 1889). It is curious that in the main, international tournament the winner was his future opponent (incidentally, a colleague and friend of his brother Berthold) Doctor Tarrasch, declared by the press to be 'Anderssen's successor'...

After gaining first prize and the master title, the 20-year-old Emanuel also received his first invitation to an international tournament – Amsterdam 1889: 1. Burn – 7 out of 8; 2. Lasker – 6; 3. Mason – 5½; 4. Van Vliet – 5; 5. Gunsberg – 4; 6. Bauer – 3½ etc. Here he had the good fortune to carry out a brilliant combination, which became a classic example of the destructive double bishop sacrifice.

Game 36
Em.Lasker-J.Bauer
Amsterdam 1889
Bird Opening A03

1 f4 d5 2 e3 ♘f6 3 b3?! (3 ♘f3! is more accurate, not allowing 3...d4!) **3...e6 4 ♗b2 ♗e7 5 ♗d3 b6** (5...c5 is also quite good) **6 ♘f3** (6 ♕e2!?) **6...♗b7** (6...♗a6!?) **7 ♘c3 ♘bd7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♘e2** (9 ♘e5!?) **9...c5**

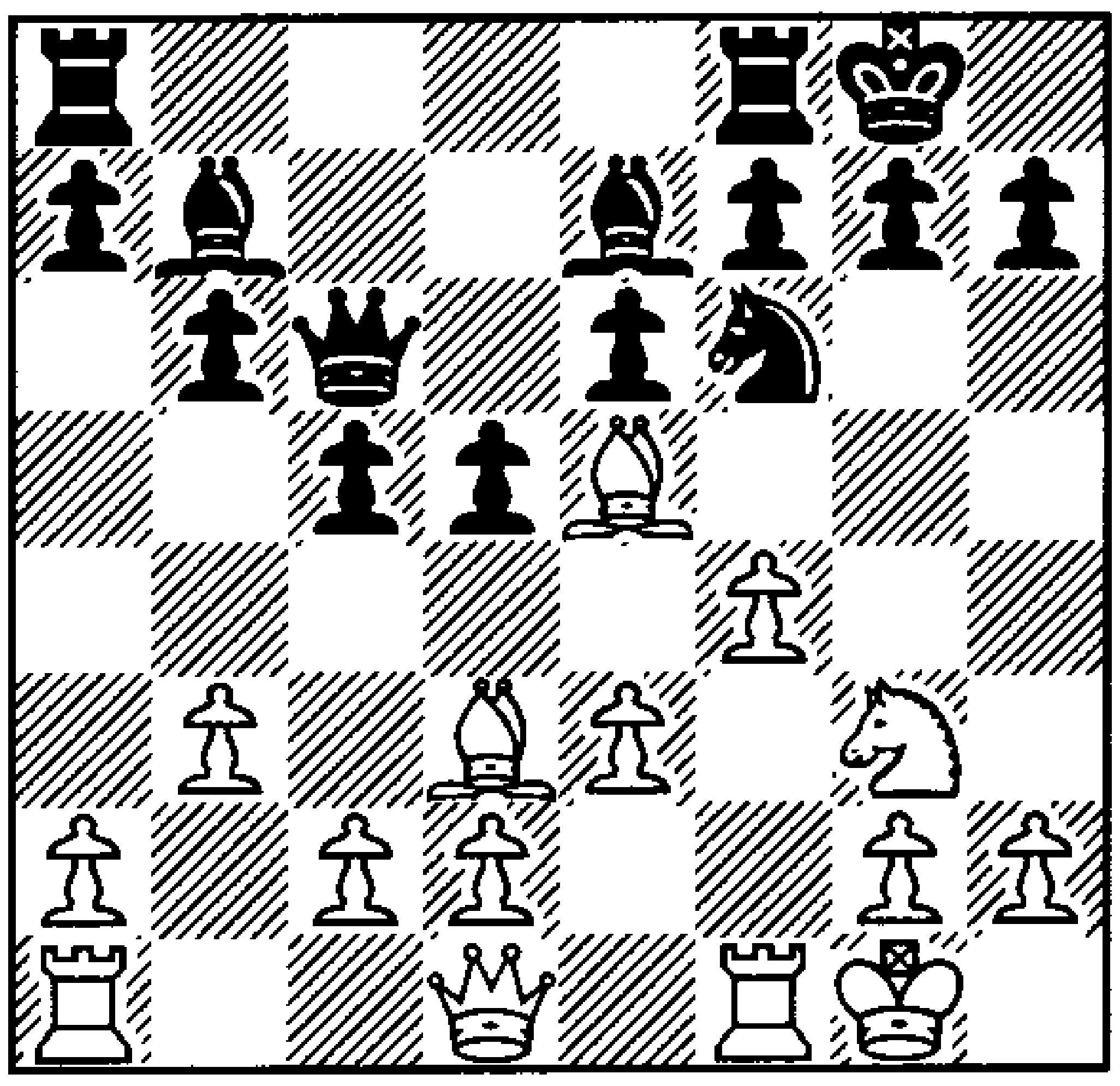
9...♘c5 and ...♘xd3 is evidently safer.

10 ♘g3 ♕c7 (10...♘e4!?) **11 ♘e5 ♘xe5**

In Zak's opinion, better is 11...d4 12 exd4 cxd4 13 ♗xd4 ♗c5! with equal chances, but matters are not so clear after 13 ♕e2! ♕d6 14 ♖ae1 ♘c5 15 f5.

12 ♗xe5 ♕c6

With the obvious idea of ...d5-d4.



13 ♕e2!

A psychologically subtle move: both prophylactically defending g2, and threatening ♗b5, which in fact is a sham – the bishop is looking in quite the opposite direction! 'If Lasker had indeed worked out everything to the end, why then did he make his 13th move with his queen?' writes Boris Vainstein in his book *Myslitel* (The Thinker, 1981). 'After all, the combination would also have worked with the queen on d1...' Nothing of the sort! After 13 ♘h5 d4! no win for White is apparent:

1) 14 ♖f2 dxe3 (14...♘xh5 15 ♕xh5 f5 16

exd4 ♕d7 17 c3 ♗f6 is also acceptable, but not 14...♘e8? 15 ♗xg7! ♗h4 16 ♕g4 ♗xf2+ 17 ♔xf2 f5 18 ♕g5 dxe3+ 19 dxe3 ♖f7 20 ♗e5+ ♔f8 21 ♖d1) 15 dxe3 ♘xh5 16 ♗xh7+ (16 ♕xh5 f5 17 ♖d1 ♖ad8 is equal) 16...♔xh7 17 ♕xh5+ ♔g8 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♕g4+ ♔h7 20 ♕h5+ ♔g7 with perpetual check (but not 21 ♖f3? ♕xf3! 22 gxf3 ♖h8 and wins);

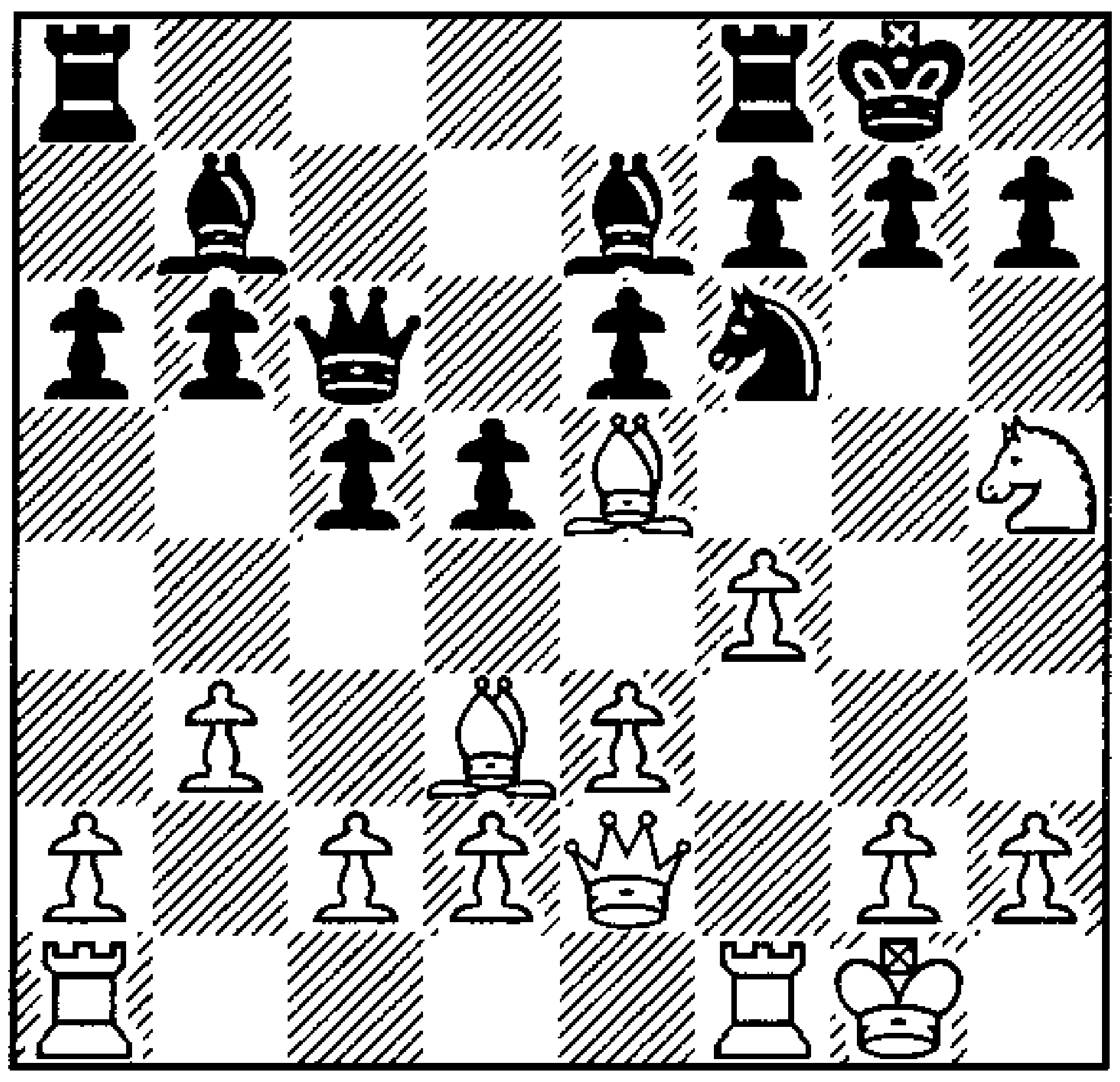
2) 14 ♘xf6+ gxf6! (14...♗xf6 15 ♕g4 ♗xe5 16 fxe5 dxe3 17 dxe3 ♖ad8 18 ♖f3 is dangerous for Black) 15 ♗xh7+ (15 ♕g4+ ♔h8 16 ♕h3 ♕xg2+!) 15...♔xh7 (15...♔h8? 16 e4! fxe5 17 ♕h5 ♔g7 18 ♖f3 wins for White) 16 ♕h5+ ♔g7 17 ♖f3 ♖g8 18 ♖g3+ ♔f8 19 ♕h6+ ♔e8 20 ♖xg8+ ♔d7 21 ♖g4 (or 21 ♖g7 fxe5 22 fxe5 ♕e4 23 ♖f1 ♖f8) 21...fxe5 22 fxe5 dxe3 23 ♕xe3 f5 with a double-edged game.

13...a6?

Bauer falls into the trap set for him, although he had a reasonable choice between 13...♘e4 (13...♖fd8?! 14 f5) 14 ♘xe4 dxe4 15 ♗c4 (15 ♗b5 ♕c8 16 ♕g4 f6 17 ♗b2 ♗d5 is level) 15...f6 16 ♗c3 ♕d7 17 f5 ♗d5 18 fxe6 ♕xe6 19 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 20 ♕g4 ♖f7 and 13...♘d7 14 ♘h5 (14 ♗b2 ♗f6) 14...f6 (not 14...♘xe5? 15 fxe5) 15 ♗b5 ♕c8 16 ♕g4 ♖f7 17 ♗b2 a6 18 ♗e2 ♕c6 with equal chances in each instance.

14 ♘h5!

Signalling the start of a ferocious storming of the king's fortress.



14...♘xh5

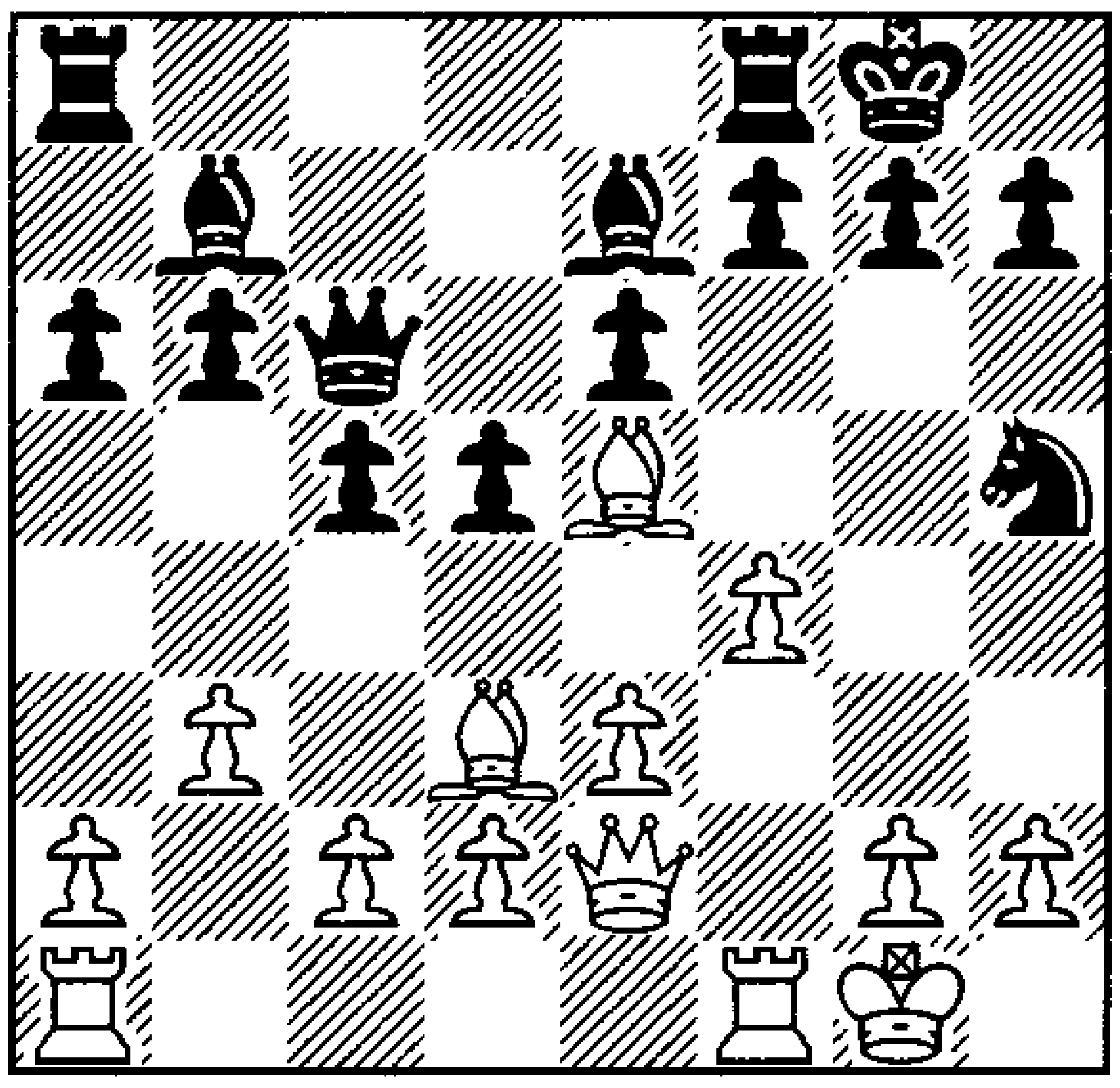
It is amazing that Black's position is already practically hopeless:

1) 14...d4 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16 ♕g4 ♔h8 (16...e5 17 ♗e4!) 17 ♖f3 ♖g8 (17...dxe3 18 ♘xf6 gxf6 19 ♕h4) 18 ♗xh7! ♖gd8 19 ♕h3 ♗e7 20 ♗e4!;

2) 14...♘e8 15 ♗xg7! c4 (15...♘xg7 16 ♕g4; 15...f5 16 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 17 a4) 16 ♗d4 f5 17 bxc4 dxc4 18 ♗xc4 b5 19 ♗b3 (Fritz);

3) 14...h6 15 ♗xf6 (or 15 ♘xg7!? ♔xg7 16 ♕g4+ ♔h8 17 ♕h4 ♔g7 18 ♖f3 winning) 15...♗xf6 16 ♘xf6+ gxf6 17 ♕g4+ ♔h8 18 ♖f3! (more accurate than 18 ♕h4 ♔g7 19 ♖f3 ♖fd8 20 ♖g3+ ♔f8 21 ♕xh6+ ♔e7) 18...♖g8 19 ♕h4 ♔g7 20 ♖g3+ ♔f8 21 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 22 ♕xh6 f5 23 ♖f1;

4) 14...♖fd8!? (the only way of avoiding an immediate rout) 15 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 (15...gxf6 16 ♕h5 ♔f8 17 ♕h6+ and ♗xf6 wins) 16 ♗xh7+! (or 16 ♗xf6 gxf6 17 ♕g4+ ♔f8 – but not 17...♔h8? 18 ♕h4 f5 19 ♕f6+ and ♖f3 – 18 ♗xh7 etc.) 16...♔f8 (16...♔xh7? 17 ♕h5+ ♔g8 18 ♗xf6 gxf6 19 ♕h6! and ♖f3 winning) 17 ♗xf6 gxf6, continuing to resist a pawn down.



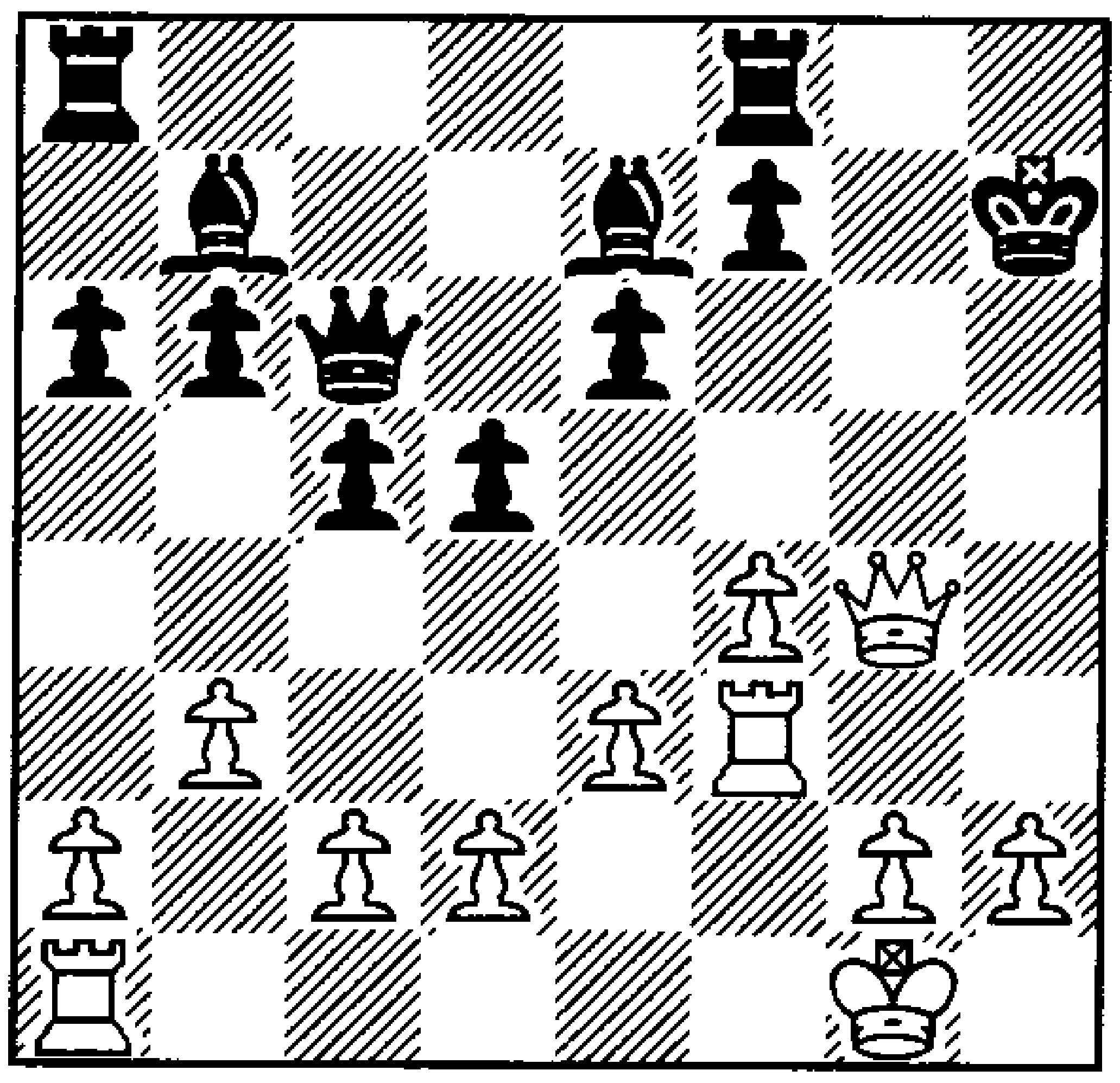
15 ♗xh7+! (of course, not 15 ♕xh5? f5) **15...♔xh7 16 ♕xh5+ ♔g8 17 ♗xg7!!**

This double bishop sacrifice is Lasker's patent (later, in St Petersburg 1914, Tarrasch knocked out Nimzowitsch in similar fashion – *Game No.51*). Modern computer programs find his combination with frightening speed: on the calculation of the main 15-move variation, Fritz, for example, spends not more than 13 seconds!

17...♔xg7

If 17...f5 there is a choice of winning moves between 18 ♖f3 ♗f6 19 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 20 ♖h3! ♔f8 21 ♕g5 e5 22 ♖h7 and 18 ♗e5 ♖f6 19 ♖f3 ♔f8 20 ♖g3, and if 17...f6 – between 18 ♗h6 and 18 ♖f3 ♕e8 19 ♕h8+ ♔f7 20 ♕h7 ♕c6 21 ♕h5+!

18 ♕g4+ ♔h7 19 ♖f3



19...e5 20 ♖h3+ ♕h6 21 ♖xh6+ ♔xh6 (by giving up his queen Black has avoided mate, but not defeat) **22 ♕d7!**

Winning a piece, and with it the game.

22...♗f6 23 ♕xb7 ♔g7 (23...exf4 24 ♕xb6 ♔g7 25 ♖f1 and 23...♖ab8 24 ♕xd5 ♖bd8 25 ♕c6 ♔g7 26 d3 both win for White) **24 ♖f1 ♖ab8 25 ♕d7**

Or 25 ♕xd5 ♖bd8 26 ♕f3 ♖xd2 27 ♕g4+ ♔h7 28 ♕f5+ ♔g7 29 fxe5.

25...♖fd8 (25...e4 26 ♕xd5 ♖fd8 27 ♕xe4 ♖xd2 28 ♕c4 a5 29 ♖f2 and wins) **26 ♕g4+ ♔f8 27 fxe5 ♗g7** (27...♗xe5 28 ♕f5) **28 e6 ♖b7 29 ♕g6 f6 30 ♖xf6+! ♗xf6 31 ♕xf6+ ♔e8 32 ♕h8+ ♔e7 33 ♕g7+ ♔xe6 34 ♕xb7 ♖d6 35 ♕xa6 d4 36 exd4 cxd4 37 h4 d3 38 ♕xd3 1-0**

After returning to Berlin, Lasker won a mini-match against Bardeleben (+2 -1 =1), and then crushed by a score of +5 =3 none other than Mieses, the third prize-winner at the congress in Breslau!

In 1890 he travelled to England, where he defeated Bird, Englisch and a number of other masters. Lasker's name became known throughout Europe. A year later the future world champion again visited the shores of the misty Albion and soon, like Steinitz 30 years earlier and Zukertort – 20, he settled in London for a long time. The stakes there were higher, and there was the lure of its halo, not yet altogether lost, of the chess capital of the world...

The Unacknowledged King

As has already been mentioned, in 1892/93 Steinitz had three real rivals for the throne: Chigorin – the participant in the two previous matches for the world championship (1889, 1892), Tarrasch – the winner of Breslau 1889, Manchester 1890 and Dresden 1892, and the improving Lasker. The successes of the latter were as yet modest, but stable: confident victories in two English tournaments in 1892, and crushing match wins over Blackburne (+6 =4) and Bird (+5 =0).

Realising that for contesting the world crown this was insufficient, Lasker challenged Tarrasch to a match. But the latter replied that he would accept the challenge, only when the 'young man' had taken first place in a strong international tournament, and he explained his refusal in the following way: 'Since in the world there are now several players whose successes are superior to Lasker's English victories, I would have been unfair to them. If Lasker wanted to test his strength, he should not have avoided participating in the Dresden tournament...'

And for the moment Tarrasch decided to play a match with Chigorin. But their clash in the autumn in St Petersburg did not produce a winner: +9 -9 =4 (this match was described on p.89).

But what was the spurned Lasker, with his ambitions, to do? There were no big tournaments in prospect, and at the end of 1892 he set off on a long tour of America, where he won matches against Schowalter (+6 -2 =2) and other American and Cuban masters, and then in the autumn of 1893 took first prize at a tournament in New York, scoring 13 out of 13 (4½ points ahead of Albin and 6 ahead of the young Pillsbury, the future victor in Hastings). This already made an impression. Still before that, in August, when Tarrasch and Chigorin were still only preparing for their candidates match, Lasker sent a challenge to Steinitz without delay. And the elderly world champion, who earlier had called the match with Chigorin 'his last', accepted the challenge, since he never avoided a fight!

The Steinitz-Lasker match took place from 15 March to 26 May 1894 in New York, Philadelphia and Montreal. They played, as was now the custom, to the first to win 10 games, with a time control of two hours for the first 30 moves and then one hour for every 15. The prize for the winner was $2,250, and $750 for the loser. In the event of the champion losing, he had the right to a return match.

The start of the match was genuinely intriguing and bloody. In the first game Lasker outwitted his opponent 'Bronstein-style', but Steinitz gained spectacular revenge in the second. Then the two players again exchanged heavy blows and followed up with two fighting draws (where in both cases Steinitz was a pawn up). After six games the scores were level – 3-3, and the turning point became the tremendously intense and dramatic seventh game.

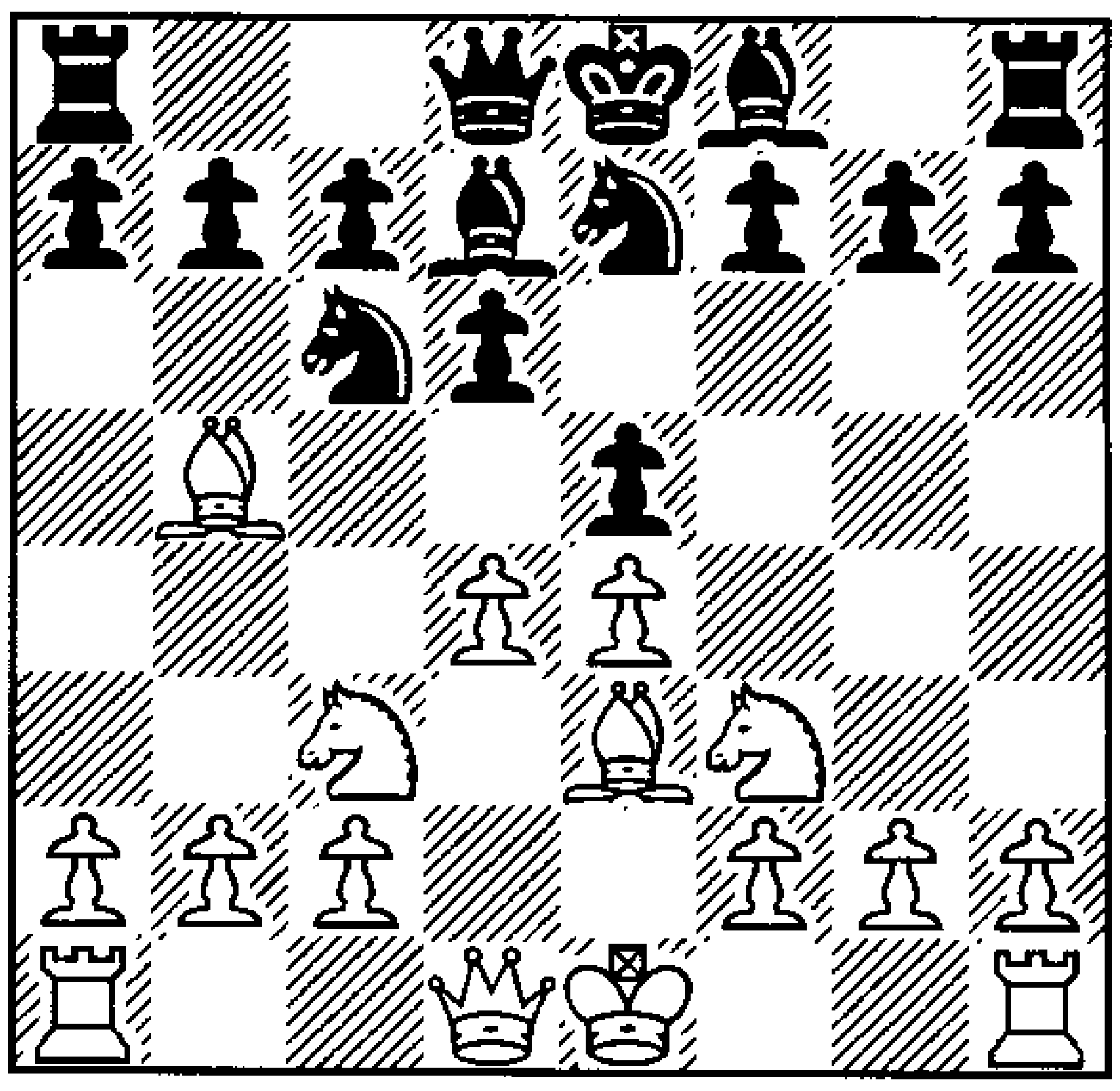
Game 37
Em.Lasker-W.Steinitz
World Championship,
USA/Canada 1894, 7th game
Ruy Lopez C62

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 d6 4 d4 ♗d7 5 ♘c3 ♘ge7

Steinitz's classical defence.

6 ♗e3

Before this Lasker played 6 ♗c4, but in the fifth game after 6...exd4 7 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 8 ♕xd4 ♘c6 9 ♕e3 ♗e6 (Black fails to equalise by 9...♘e5 10 ♗b3 c6 11 ♕g3 or 10...♗e6 11 f4 ♘c4 12 ♕g3, as in the first and third games; 9...♗e7!?) 10 ♘d5 ♗e7 11 ♗d2 0-0 12 0-0 ♘e5 13 ♗b3 ♗xd5 14 ♗xd5 c6 15 ♗b3 ♘d7 16 ♖ad1 a5 17 c3 a4 18 ♗c2 ♖e8 19 ♕h3 ♘f8 20 ♗e3 ♕a5 Black obtained a solid enough position.

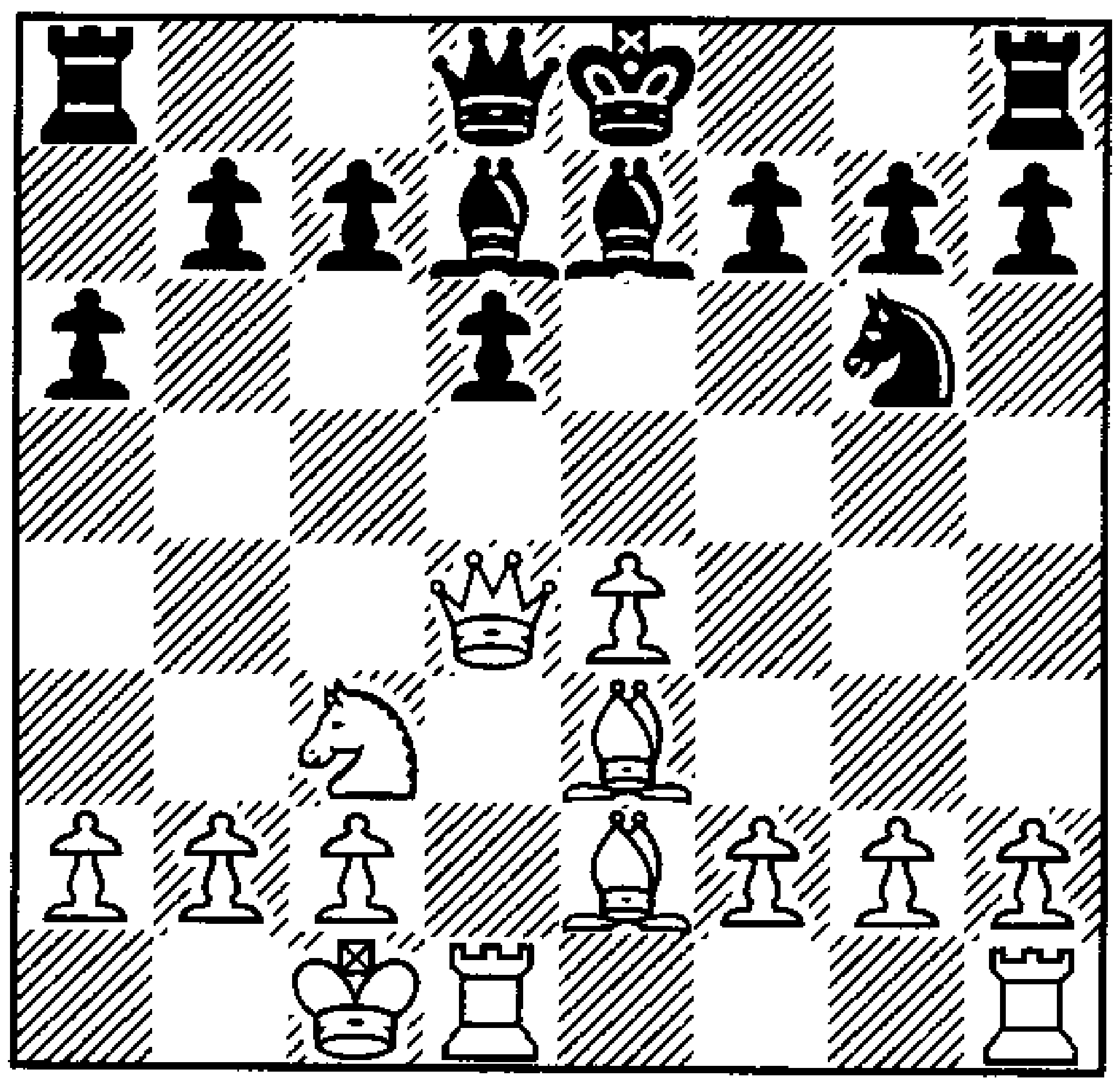


6...♘g6 7 ♕d2 ♗e7 8 0-0-0 (8 0-0 0-0 9 ♖ad1 is quieter) **8...a6 9 ♗e2 exd4!**

If 9...0-0?!, then 10 dxe5! is unpleasant, for example: 10...♘gxe5 11 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 12 f4 with the initiative.

10 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 11 ♕xd4

'Not allowing the exchange of bishops after 11 ♗xd4 ♗g5!' (Zak). True, 12 ♗e3 ♗xe3 13 ♕xe3 leaves White with a slight advantage.



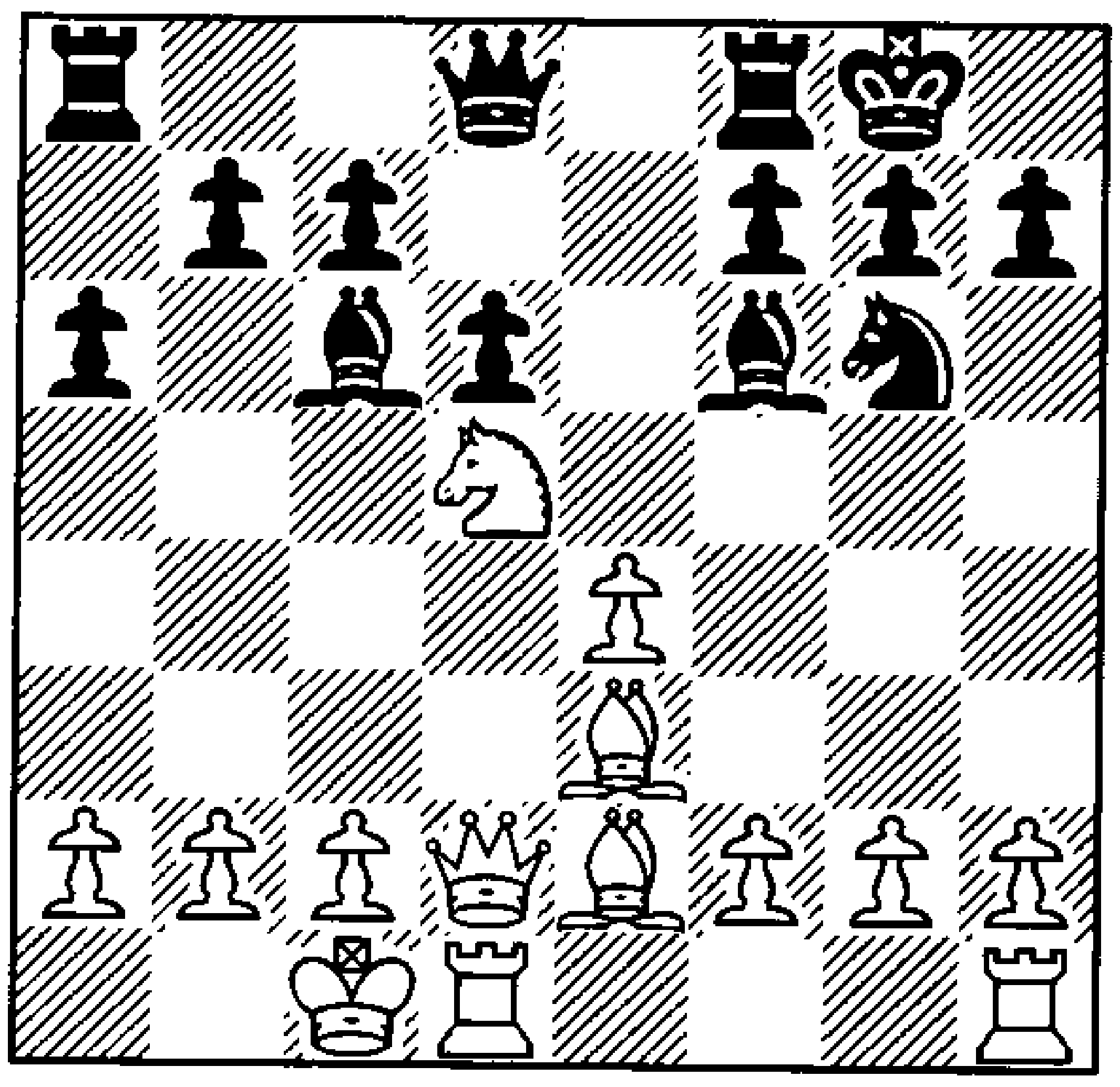
11...♗f6 12 ♕d2 ♗c6 (or 12...0-0 13 f3

♖e8 14 ♘d5) **13 ♘d5**

The preparatory 13 ♔b1 is also possible.

13...0-0

White has merely obtained slightly the freer game from the opening, but suddenly Lasker sharply disrupts the positional balance.



14 g4?!

Pawns don't move backwards! It is hard to say whether this aggressive move was made with the desire to unsettled his tenacious opponent, or if it involved some oversight. It looks logical to play 14 f3 (Lasker), 14 g3 ♖e8 15 ♗f3 and h2-h4-h5, or 14 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 15 f3 ♗b5 16 c4 ♗a4 17 ♖de1 with a small plus.

14...♖e8 15 g5

'After 15 f3 ♗xd5 16 ♕xd5 ♗e5 Black's control of f4 would have given him a good game. If 15 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 16 f3 there could have followed 16...♕e6 17 ♔b1 d5 or 17 c4 b5 with excellent prospects.' (Neishtadt)

15...♗xd5 16 ♕xd5

Dubious is 16 gxf6?! ♗xe4 17 f3 ♗f5 18 ♗d4 c5! 19 ♗c3 d5 20 ♕xd5 ♘f4 21 ♕xf5 ♘xe2+ 22 ♔b1 ♘xc3+ 23 bxc3 ♕b6+ 24 ♔a1 ♕xf6 25 ♕xf6 gxf6 26 ♖d5 ♖e3 with an extra pawn, while after 16 exd5 ♖xe3! 17 fxe3 (or 17 gxf6 ♖e5 18 fxg7 ♕f6) 17...♗xg5 and ...♕e7 Black has stable compensation for the pawn: the drawbacks of g2-g4 are felt.

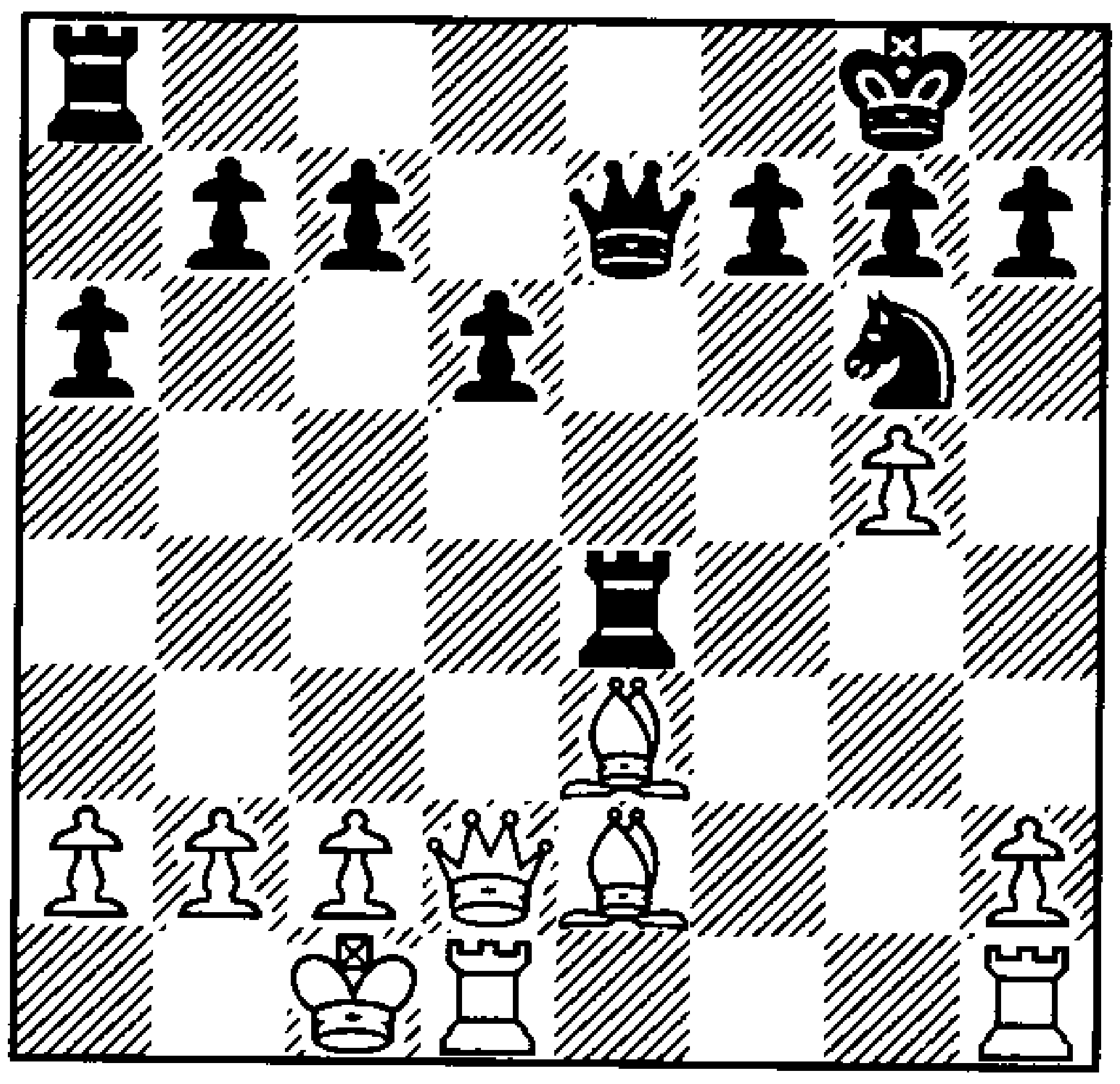
16...♖e5 17 ♕d2?!

Much better was 17 ♕xb7! ♗xg5 18 ♗xg5 ♖xg5 19 ♖hg1, although after 19...♖c5! Black has an easy game: ...a6-a5, ...♖b8, and then an attack on the kingside pawns by ...♕h4, or an attack on the king along the b- and c-files.

17...♗xg5!

Possibly Lasker was hoping for 17...♖xg5? 18 f4 ♖g2 19 ♕e1, when the black rook is 'offside'.

18 f4 ♖xe4! 19 fxg5 ♕e7

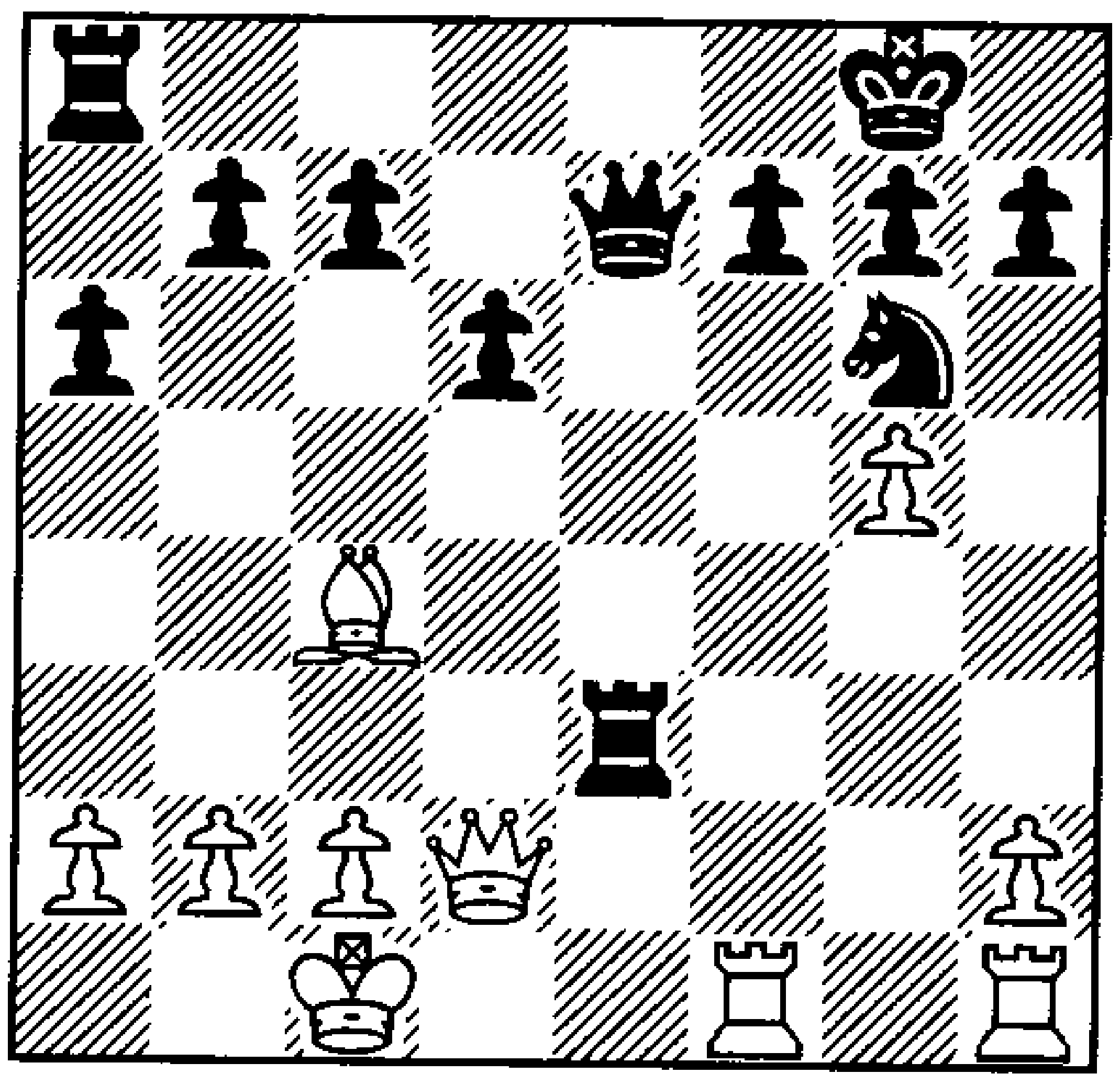


20 ♖df1?

20 ♗f3 ♖xe3 21 ♗xb7 suggests itself, for example: 21...♖b8 (21...♖e2 22 ♖he1 ♖xd2 23 ♖xe7 ♖xd1+ 24 ♔xd1 ♘xe7 25 ♗xa8 a5 is unclear) 22 ♖he1 ♖xe1 (little is promised by 22...♖e5 23 ♗xa6 ♕xg5 24 ♕xg5 ♖xg5 25 ♗c4 ♘e5 26 ♗d5) 23 ♖xe1 ♕d7 24 ♗d5 (24 ♗xa6?! ♕a4) 24...♘e5 with only some advantage to Black.

20...♖xe3 21 ♗c4

Two pawns down, in a difficult, objectively lost position, White tries to create an attack by h2-h4-h5 etc.



21...♘h8!?

Typical Steinitz! The commentators admired this eccentric move, although it is apparently not the strongest. 21...♕xg5 would have retained some advantage, for example: 22 ♖xf7 ♔h8 23 ♖xc7 ♖ae8 24 ♖d1 ♘e5 25 h4 ♕f4 26 ♗d5 b5, or 22 ♖hg1 ♕h6 23 ♗xf7+ ♔h8 24 ♗xg6 hxg6 25 ♖xg6 ♕xg6 26 ♕xe3 ♖e8. However, 21...♖f8! was the most logical, and if 22 h4 ♖e4 23 h5 either 23...♖xc4 24 hxg6 hxg6 25 ♖e1?! (25 ♔b1 ♖e4 also brings no joy) 25...♖e4! (Zak considered only 25...♕d8? 26 ♖eg1 and ♕h2) 26 ♖xe4 ♕xe4 27 ♕h2 f5 winning, or 23...♘e5!? (Neishtadt) 24 ♗d5 ♖g4 25 g6 hxg6 26 hxg6 ♘xg6 27 ♗xb7 ♕g5 and Black should win.

22 h4 c6 23 g6!

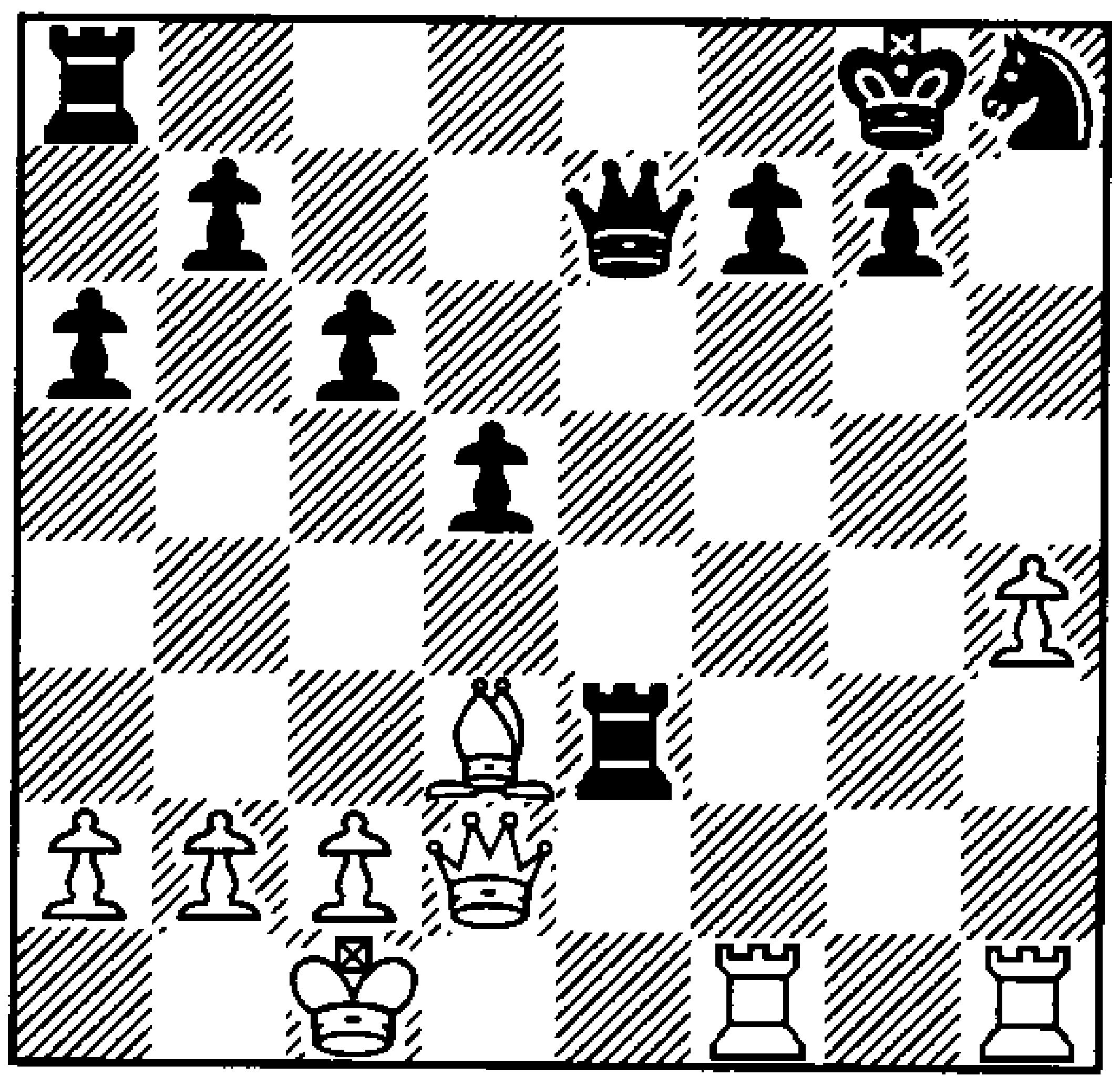
The only chance: hopeless is 23 ♖fg1 d5 24 ♗d3 ♘g6 25 h5 ♘f4 or 23 ♗d3 ♖e8 24 ♖hg1 ♕e6 25 ♔b1 b5 26 h5 c5. There now begins a sequence of irrational play, in which Lasker, as it transpires, is superior to his opponent. The problem of this position is that in nearly all variations Black is close to a win, but everywhere White retains some counter-chances. To evaluate where there are more of them, and where there are less, is not easy, and for more than a dozen moves Steinitz is obliged to solve a rather ticklish problem: how not to lose his decisive advantage?

23...d5?!

This possibly does not yet throw away the win, but clearly better was 23...hxg6! 24 h5 g5! (24...gxh5 25 ♖xh5 ♖e8 26 ♖hh1 ♕e5! will also do, or 24...d5 25 hxg6 ♘xg6 26 ♗d3 ♖xd3!, but not 26...♘f8?! 27 ♕h2 f6 28 ♗f5 with compensation for the material deficit) 25 h6 gxh6! (unclear is 25... g6?! 26 h7+ ♔g7 – 26...♔f8 27 ♗xf7! – 27 ♕h2! f5 28 ♕h6+ ♔f6 29 ♗g8!) 26 ♖xh6 (or 26 ♕h2 ♕f8 27 ♖fg1 ♖e5) 26...♖e8! 27 ♔d1 (27 ♖hh1 ♕e5) 27...♕e4 and the game is decided: 28 ♖fh1 ♘g6 29 ♗d3 ♕g4+ 30 ♔c1 ♕g3 31 ♔d1 ♘h4, or 28 ♗d3 ♕g4+ 29 ♔c1 ♕g3 30 ♔d1 ♖8e6 etc.

24 gxh7+ ♔xh7 25 ♗d3+ ♔g8

By Steinitz's standards, the position is won, but Lasker continues fighting.

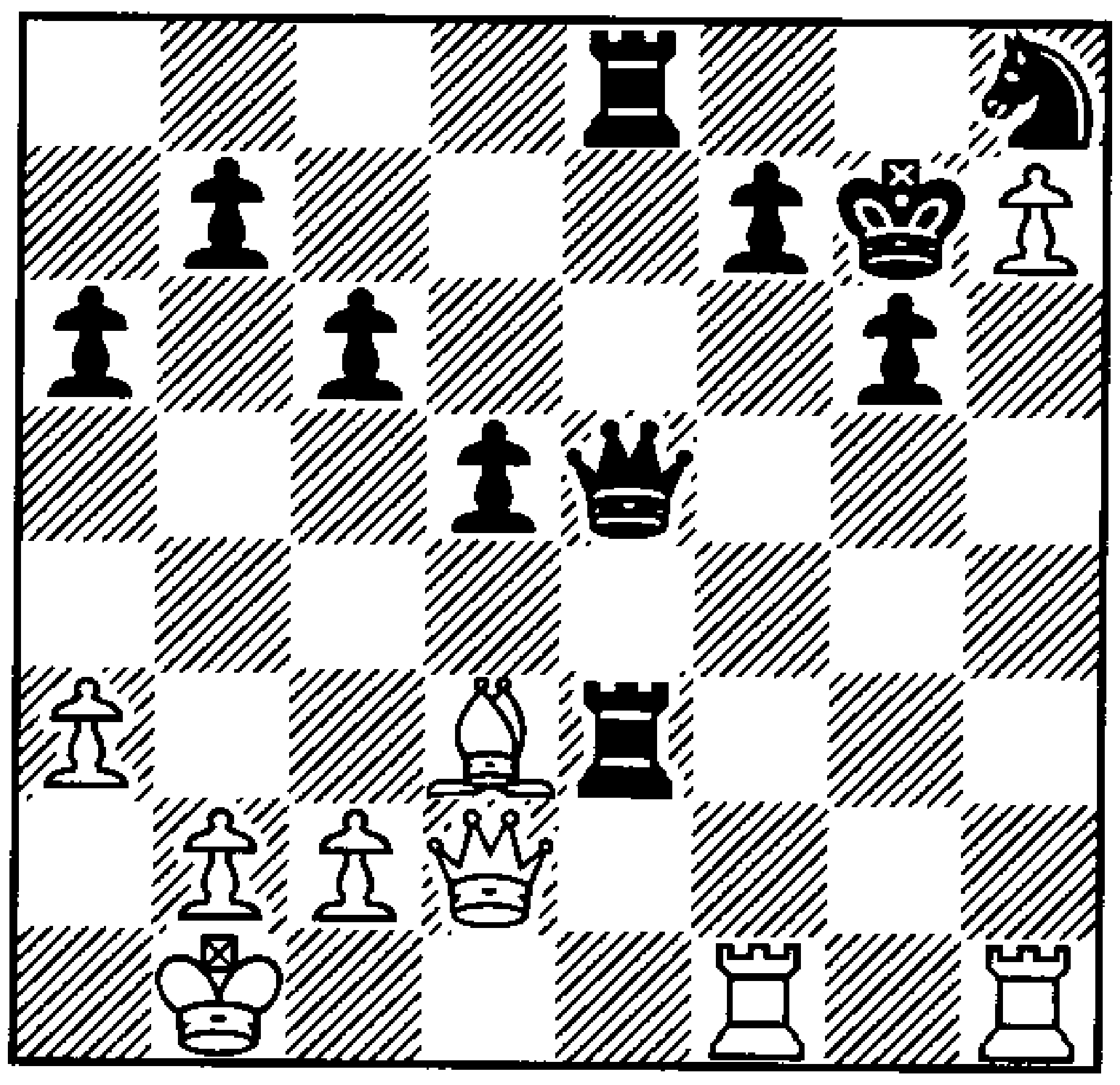


26 h5 ♖e8 27 h6 (27 ♖fg1!?) **27...g6 28 h7+ ♔g7 29 ♔b1!?**

In this game there is something of the 'Tal' element: White's attack is rather abstract, but it will not come to an end – all the time some threats arise! It is a kind of lingering compensation, which there also is after 29 ♕h2!? ♕g5 30 ♔b1 c5 31 ♖fg1 ♕e5 32 ♕h6+ ♔f6.

29...♕e5 30 a3

Lasker's last two quiet moves were completely inexplicable to his contemporaries: how can you play this way when two pawns down?!



30...c5

'Very strong was 30...♖e6, parrying the queen manoeuvre carried out in the game. If 31 ♕f2 there would have followed 31...♖f6.' (Neishtadt) However, after 31 ♕b4! b5 32

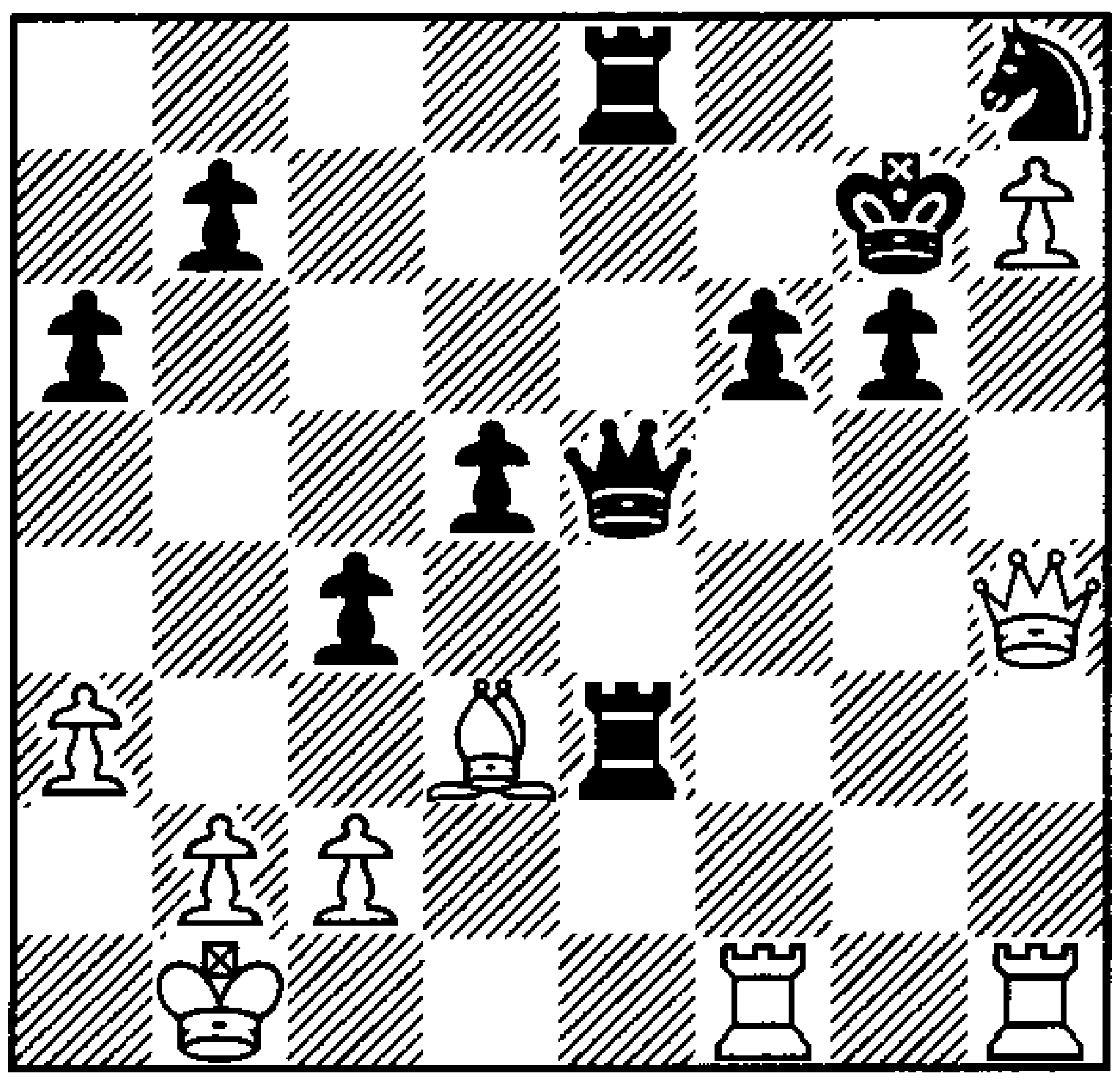
♕h4 all is by no means so clear.

31 ♕f2 (31 c3? c4 32 ♗c2 ♖e2! and 31 ♗e2 ♕e4 32 ♗d3 ♕d4 33 ♕h2 f5 34 ♖d1 ♕e5 35 ♕h6+ ♔f7 both fail) **31...c4 32 ♕h4**

But not 32 ♗xg6? fxg6 33 ♕h4 ♘f7.

32...f6

According to Chigorin, 32...♔f8 was completely safe, avoiding weakening the g6-square. But even here after 33 ♗f5! gxf5 (Neishtadt suggested the 'restrained' 33...♖e7?, overlooking 34 ♗xg6! ♘xg6 35 ♖hg1 and wins) 34 ♖hg1 f6 35 ♖g8+ ♔e7 36 ♖fg1 ♖e4 37 ♕f2 it is altogether unclear who is winning.



33 ♗f5

A key moment: to keep his attack alive, Lasker now also gives up a piece. He subtly sensed that the misplaced black king and the 'sleeping' knight at h8 would promise White excellent compensation: 33...gxf5?! 34 ♖hg1+ ♔f7 35 ♕h5+ ♔e7 36 ♖xf5 etc. So how should Black play? Even a powerful computer required a considerable amount of time to understand this intricate position...

33...♔f7?!

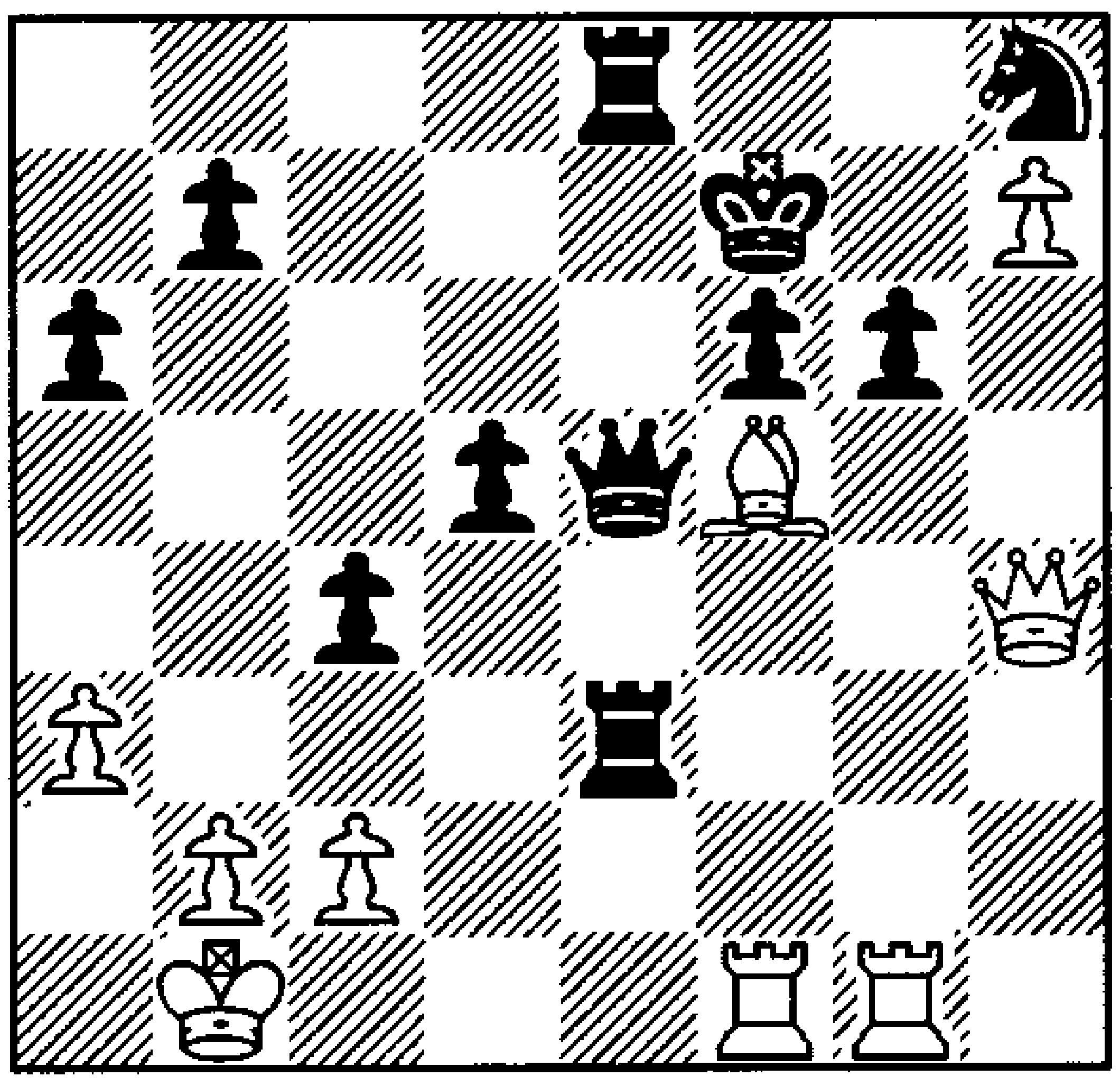
Not an easy choice. Later those researching the games of Steinitz and Lasker suggested two 'ways to win':

1) 33...♕g3 34 ♕h6+ ♔f7 35 ♖hg1? ♖e1+ 36 ♔a2 ♕xg1!, but here 35 ♗d7! ♖d8 36 ♖h3 ♕e1+ 37 ♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 38 ♔a2 ♖xd7 is unclear;

2) 33...♖g3 34 ♔a2 (but not 34 ♖e1? ♕xe1+ 35 ♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 36 ♔a2 ♖gg1 and wins) 34...♕d6!, although 34 ♗g4! is stronger, when there is still all to play for.

34 ♖hg1!

34 ♗h3 and ♗g2 is too slow.



34...gxf5

'Here it is, the decisive mistake!' 'Suicidal!' – exclaimed the commentators, maintaining that there was nothing threatening Black, and recommending the 'winning' 34...b5 (or 34...c3): if 35 ♕h6 there is 35...♖g3! In fact, far stronger is 35 ♗xg6+! ♘xg6 36 ♕g4! (but not 36 ♖xg6? ♖e1+ 37 ♖xe1 ♕xe1+ 38 ♕xe1 ♖xe1+ 39 ♔a2 ♖h1 and Black wins) 36...♘h8 37 ♕g7+!? (37 ♕d7+ ♖e7 38 ♕c8 ♖e8 39 ♕d7+ is sufficient for a draw) 37...♔e6 38 ♕b7 with a powerful attack, for example: 38...f5 39 ♖g8 ♔d6 40 ♖xe8 ♕xe8 41 ♖xf5 ♖e5 42 ♕xa6+ ♔c5 43 ♕a7+ ♔d6 44 ♕b6+ ♔d7 45 ♕xb5+ ♔d6 46 ♕b4+ ♔c6 47 ♖f8 and wins.

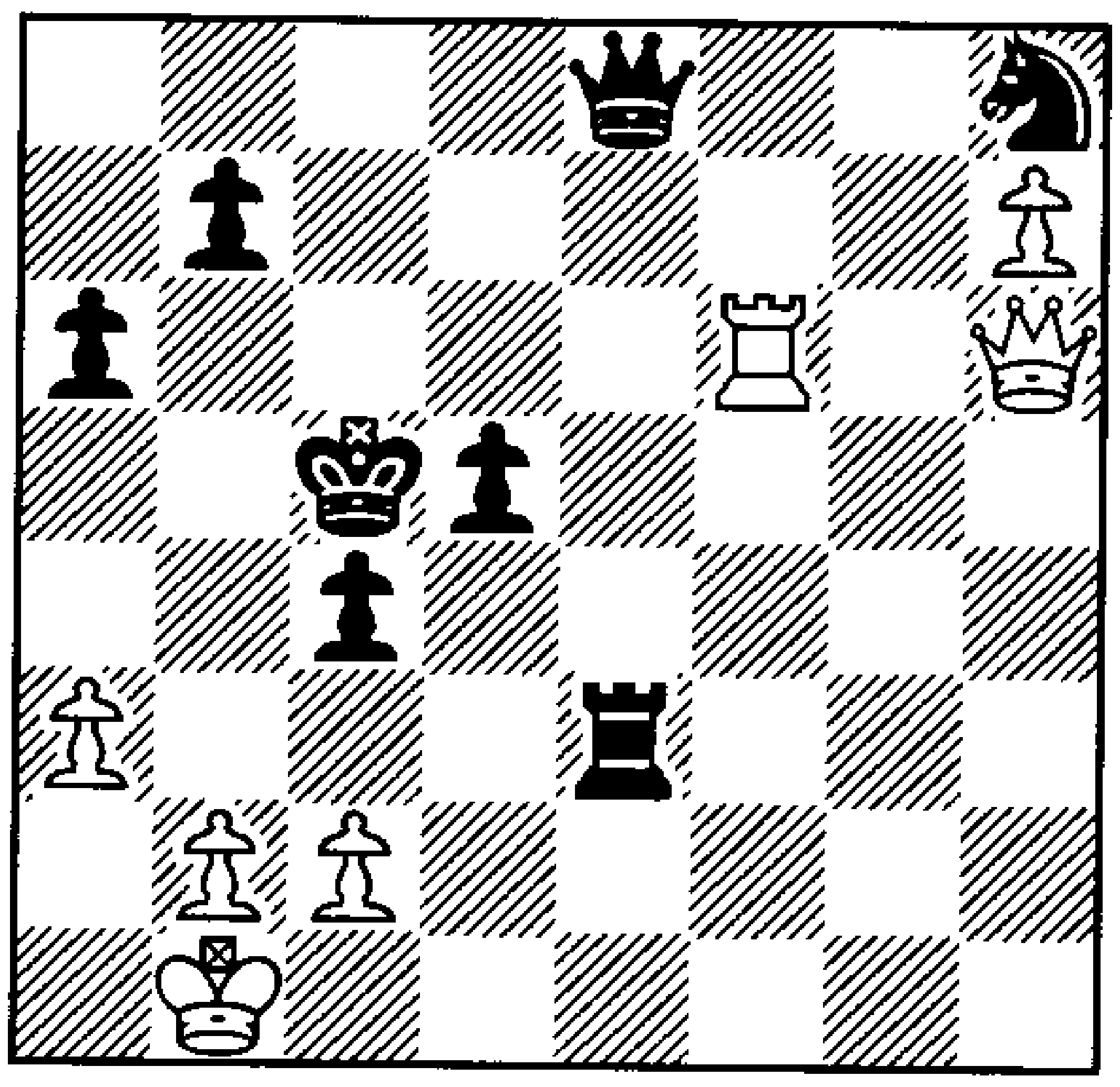
35 ♕h5+ ♔e7 36 ♖g8

Inferior is 36 ♖xf5?! ♕e6 37 ♖g7+ ♔d8 38 ♖xd5+ ♔c8 39 ♕h2 ♖e5 and Black wins.

36...♔d6?!

But this really would seem to be a mistake. Safer was 36...♔d7 (or 36...♔d8) 37 ♖xf5 ♕e6 38 ♖xd5+ ♔c7 with unclear play. However, only a thorough analysis of the further events in the game enables such a conclusion to be drawn.

37 ♖xf5 ♕e6 38 ♖xe8 (38 ♕h2+?! ♖e5) **38...♕xe8 39 ♖xf6+** (39 ♖xd5+ ♔e7) **39...♔c5** (the alternative 39...♔c7 40 ♕xd5 is also very unpleasant) **40 ♕h6**



40...♖e7?

How hard it was for Steinitz to defend! Later Chigorin recommended 40...♕e7 (and if 41 ♕f8?, then 41...♕xf8 42 ♖xf8 ♘g6 43 ♖g8 ♖h3), but after 41 ♖f8! I was unable to find a draw for Black, although this position was on my computer for a long time. To all appearances, White's attack is irresistible:

1) 41...♖e6 42 ♕d2! (a very important manoeuvre; earlier they considered only 42 ♖c8+ ♔b6! with double-edged play, but not 42...♖c6? 43 ♕d2!! ♕xh7 44 ♖xh8! ♕xh8 45 ♕b4+ ♔d4 46 ♕c3+) 42...♕xh7 43 ♖c8+ ♖c6 44 ♖xh8 ♕f7 45 ♖f8 ♕d7 46 ♕b4+ ♔d4 47 ♖f1 ♕d8 48 ♖d1+ ♔e5 49 ♖e1+ ♔f6 50 ♕c3+ ♔f7 51 ♕h3 ♔g7 52 ♖h1 winning;

2) 41...♖e1+ 42 ♔a2 ♖e6 43 ♕d2! (the same key manoeuvre) 43...♕xh7 44 ♖c8+ ♖c6 45 ♕b4+ ♔d4 46 ♖xh8 ♕xc2 47 ♖h4+ ♔e5 48 ♕e7+ ♖e6 49 ♕c7+ ♖d6 50 ♖h3 ♕g6 51 ♕e7+ ♖e6 52 ♖e3+ ♔f5 53 ♕d7 ♕g8 54 ♕xd5+ ♔f6 55 ♖f3+ ♔e7 56 ♕xb7+, and the curtain comes down.

Only 40...♖e2! would have saved Black, for example: 41 ♕g7 ♖e7 42 ♕g1+ ♖e3 (42...d4?! 43 ♕g5+ ♖e5 44 ♕g8 d3?! 45 cxd3 cxd3 46 ♕b3!) 43 ♕g8 ♖e7 44 ♖f8 ♕g6 45 ♖c8+ ♔d6 with a shaky equilibrium.

41 ♕h2!!

Quite brilliant; if 41 ♖f8?, then 41...♖xh7! White also fails to win by 41 ♕d2!? ♕d8.

41...♕d7

41...♕d8 would have been refuted by 42 ♕f2+ ♔b5 43 b3! (43 ♖f8 ♖e8 is not so clear) 43...♖e1+ 44 ♔b2 ♖e3 45 bxc4+ ♔a4 46 cxd5 ♖e4 47 d6. And if 41...♖d7 decisive is 42 ♕g1+! (Neishtadt's suggestion of 42 ♕f2+ d4 43 ♖f8 ♕e4 44 ♖xh8 is inferior in view of 44...♖xh7) 42...d4 43 ♕g5+ ♖d5 44 ♕d2.

42 ♕g1+ d4 (otherwise mate) **43 ♕g5+ ♕d5 44 ♖f5 ♕xf5** (44...♖e1+ 45 ♔a2 does not change anything) **45 ♕xf5+ ♔d6 46 ♕f6+ 1-0**

In this game, balancing on the edge of the abyss, the young Lasker demonstrated those qualities that were to enable him to hold the crown of world champion for such a long time. In a difficult position he managed to set his opponent very tricky problems, typical of the level of chess in the second half of the 20th century (similar to those that very strong opponents were set by Tal or, say, Shirov). Lasker was far ahead of his time, and it is hard to blame Steinitz for his mistakes: he fought with all his might, under a continual and savage attack. Because this ultra-tense game was ahead of its time, it was overshadowed and remained underrated: their contemporaries simply could not understand what happened in it...

I think that the seventh game became the decisive one in the match, breaking Steinitz's resistance. He experienced an almost mystical horror: was this really possible?! Such things don't happen!! 'Whereas the champion endured with fortitude the purely chess defeats, again mobilising himself completely for the next game, this psychological defeat strongly affected him. All the systemic connections in his defensive methods and rules collapsed. After this Steinitz lost a further four games in succession!' (B. Vainstein)

The outcome of the match was decided, and its Montreal part merely determined the final score: +10 -5 =4 in favour of Lasker, who thus became the second world champion in history. After losing the final, 19th game, Steinitz got up with difficulty from his chair, leaning on his stick, and pronounced three 'hurrahs' for the new 'world chess king' and promptly... settled down to play cards with some friends.

Although Lasker had gained a convincing victory, the chess world was not in a hurry to acknowledge him as the true champion: many explained Steinitz's defeat as being due to his advanced age and the fact that he was unwell. Tarrasch (who, incidentally, had won his fourth international tournament in succession, Leipzig 1894) also had a dig at his expense: 'The final games of the match merely provoke profound regret. Whereas in the initial games, especially the seventh, the usual strength of the old master is no longer apparent, the remainder increasingly resemble the last games of Zukertort, who late in life completely lost his inherent strength, resourcefulness, initiative, confidence...'

American Tragedy

Hastings 1895 – the most important tournament of the 19th century, which assembled the entire cream of world chess – was called on to clarify the situation at the top. As was written in the press, 'the fact alone that among the participants is the star quartet – Lasker, Steinitz, Tarrasch and Chigorin – gives it historic significance.'

However, suddenly the hitherto unknown young American Harry Nelson Pillsbury (1872-1906) intervened in the battle of the stars. After losing in the first round to Chigorin, he then set a furious pace (9½ out of 10!) and burst into the leading group, staggering everyone with his powerful, forceful play. Take, for example, his win over Tarrasch!

Game 38

H.Pillsbury-S.Tarrasch

Hastings 1895, 2nd round

Queen's Gambit D55

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6

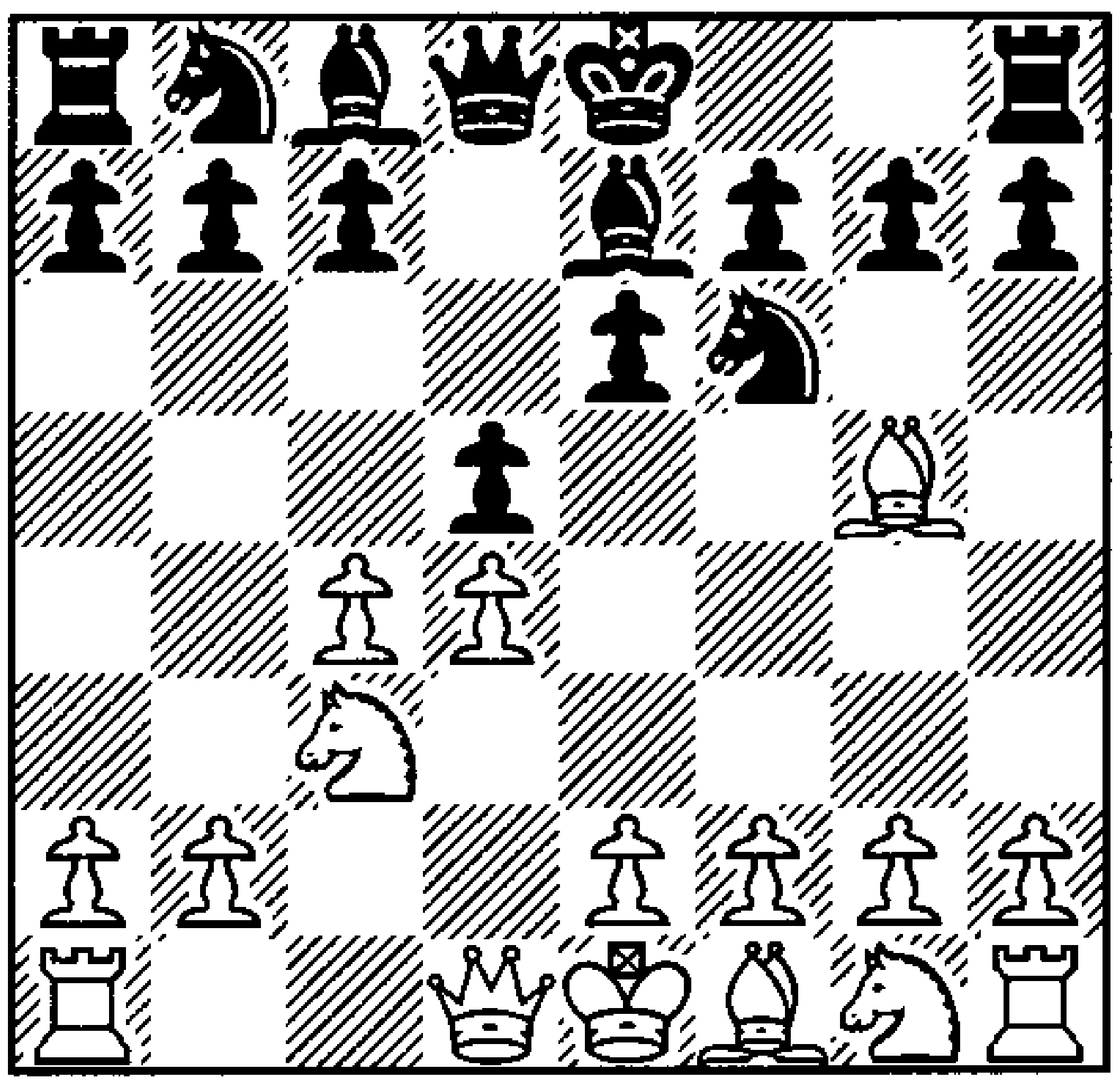
Later Tarrasch became a fervent supporter of the defence 3...c5, which bears his name.

4 ♗g5

This move, known since the middle of the century and tried by Steinitz against Anderssen (Vienna 1873), became a formidable force in Pillsbury's hands.

4...♗e7

Soon afterwards Pillsbury himself suggested the original defence 4...♘bd7 5 e3 c6 6 ♘f3 ♕a5, which later became known in opening theory as the Cambridge Springs Variation.



5 ♘f3

In the event of 5 e3 0-0 6 ♘f3 b6 7 cxd5 exd5 (7...♘xd5!?) 8 ♗d3 White saves a tempo on ♖c1, and here is what can result from this:

1) 8...♗b7 (8...♗e6!?) 9 ♘e5 (Rubinstein played 9 ♕c2!? ♘bd7 10 0-0-0 – *Game No.60*, and Geller – 9 0-0 ♘bd7 10 ♕e2 c5 11 ♗a6!) 9...♘bd7 10 f4 c5 (10...♘e4!? 11 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 12 ♗xe4 dxe4 13 0-0 f5 with an unclear game, Pillsbury-Schiffers, Vienna 1898; Pillsbury-Mason, Monte Carlo 1903) 11 0-0 c4 (11...a6 12 ♕f3 ♖e8 13 ♖ad1 cxd4 14 exd4 b5 15 a3 ♖c8? 16 ♗f5 ♖c7 17 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 18 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 19 ♘xd5 with a won game Pillsbury-Gottschall, Hanover 1902; 11...cxd4!?) 12 ♗c2 a6 13 ♕f3 b5 14 ♕h3 g6 15 f5 b4 16 fxg6 hxg6 17 ♕h4! bxc3 18 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 19 ♖xf6! and White won (Pillsbury-Marco, Paris 1900);

2) 8...♘bd7 9 0-0 c5 10 ♘e5 ♘xe5 (10...♗b7 11 f4) 11 dxe5 ♘d7 12 ♗f4 ♗b7 13 ♕f3 ♖e8 14 ♕h3 ♘f8 15 ♖ad1 ♘g6 16 ♗g3!

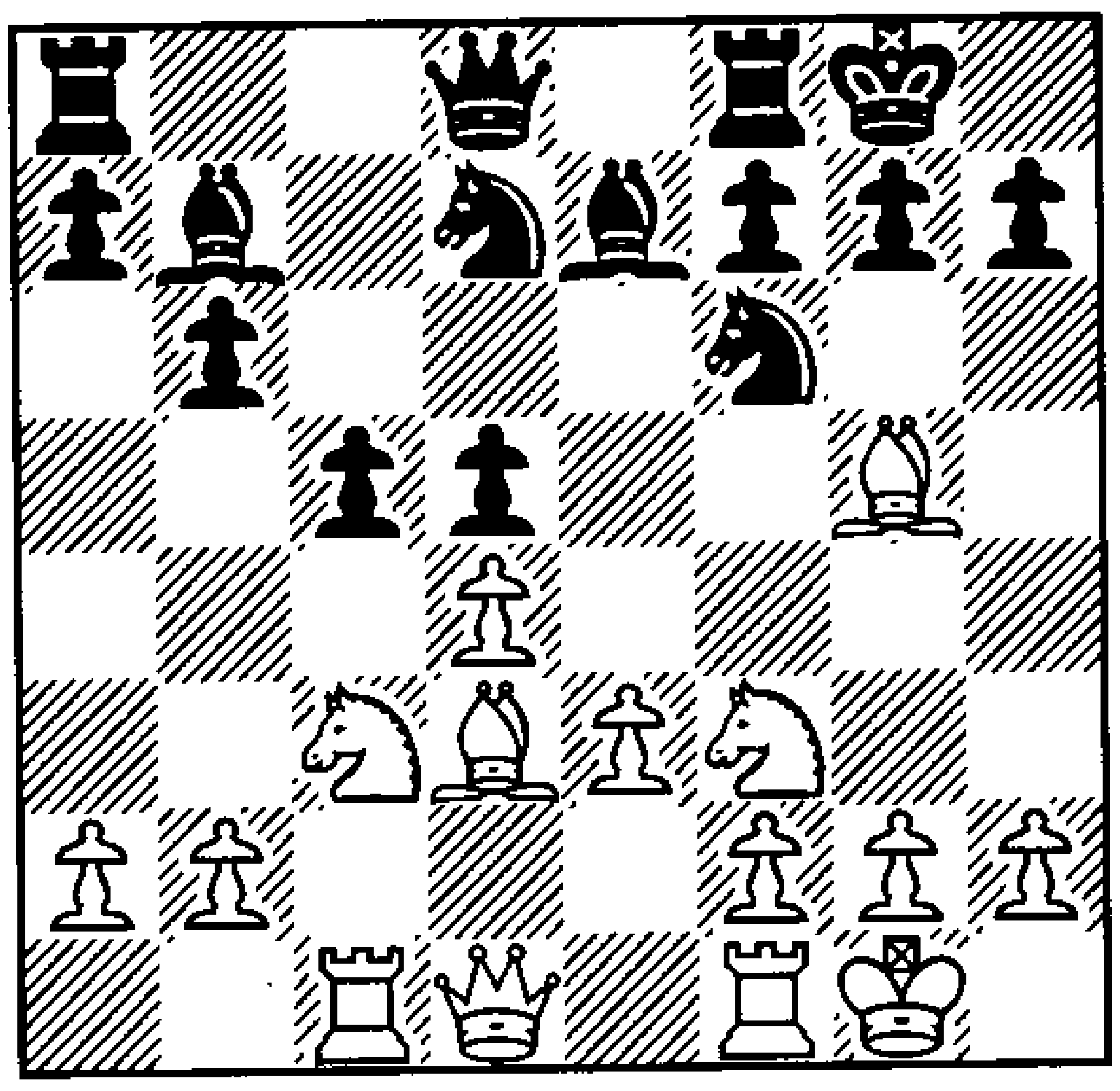
♗f8 17 f4 a6 18 ♗c2 b5 19 e6! fxe6 20 f5 exf5 21 ♕xf5 with an attack (Schlechter-Janowski, Ostend 1905).

5...♘bd7 6 ♖c1 0-0 7 e3 b6 (7...c6!) **8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♗d3**

Or immediately 9 ♘e5 (9 ♕a4 – *Game Nos.79, 89*) 9...♗b7 10 f4, for example: 10...a6 11 ♗d3 c5 12 0-0 c4 13 ♗f5 b5 14 ♖f3 ♖e8 15 ♖h3 g6 16 ♗b1 ♘xe5 17 fxe5 ♘d7 18 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 19 ♕f3 ♘f8 20 ♖f1 ♕d7 21 ♕f6 b4? (21...♖e6!) 22 ♘a4! ♕c7 23 ♘c5 ♗c8 24 ♖h6 a5 25 ♖f4 ♖b8 26 ♗xg6! 1-0 (Pillsbury-Wolf, Monte Carlo 1903).

9...♗b7 10 0-0 c5

A *tabiya* of the variation that is known in opening theory as the orthodox fianchetto.



11 ♖e1?!

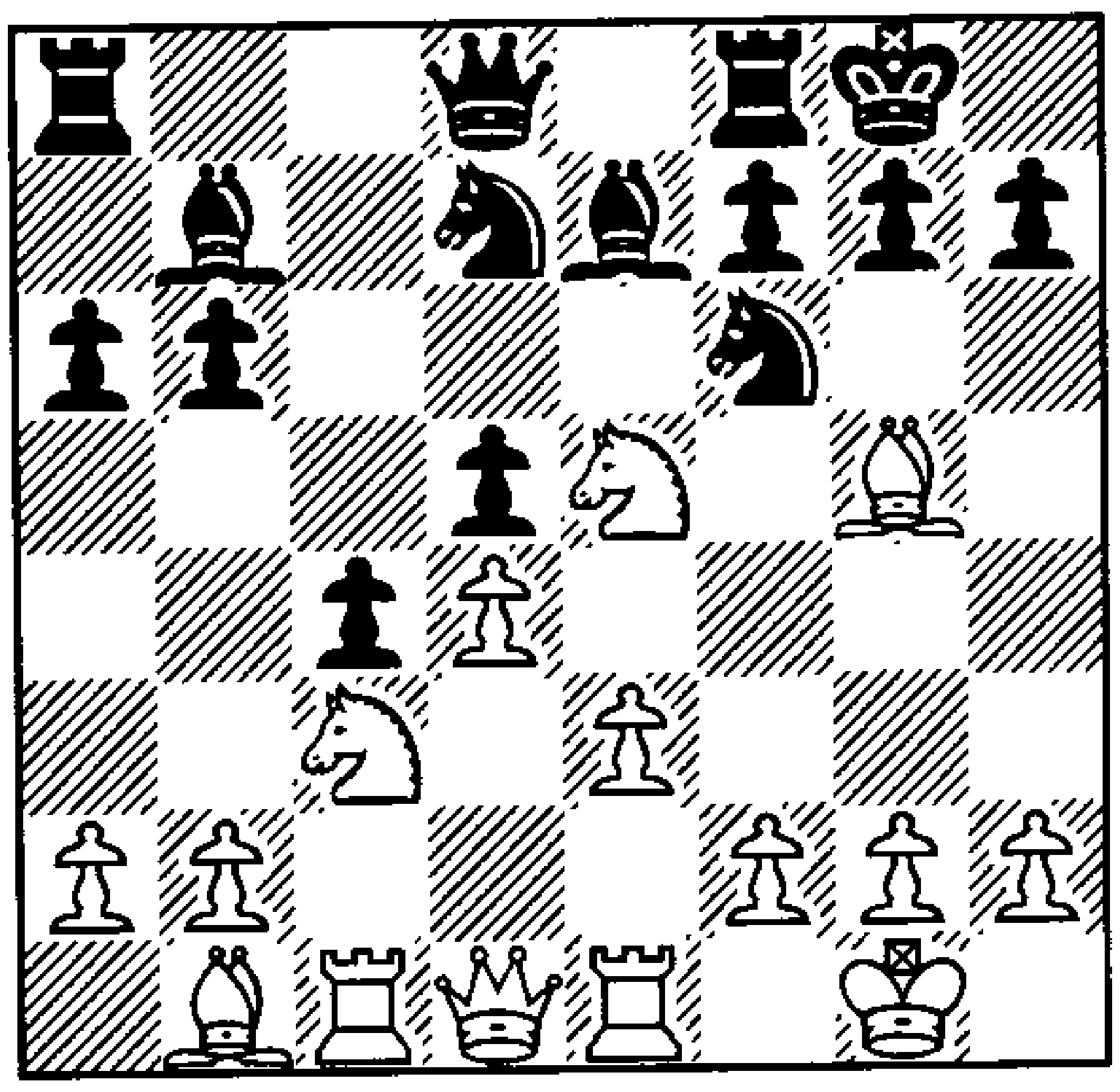
A waste of an important tempo, as is 11 ♗b1?! ♘e4! equalising (Pillsbury-Schlechter, Hastings 1895). However, we should not forget how hard it is to take the first steps... 11 ♘e5 is premature in view of 11...♘xe5 12 dxe5 ♘e4! with equality (Marshall-Janowski, Paris 3rd matchgame 1905), therefore White must find the optimal move order. Modern theory prefers 11 ♗f5, while in those years the best was thought to be Schlechter's recommendation 11 ♕e2:

1) 11...c4 (after 11...cxd4?! 12 exd4 and ♘e5 there is the additional threat of ♗a6) 12 ♗b1 a6 13 ♘e5! b5 14 f4 h6?! (14...♘e4 15 ♗xe4 dxe4 16 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 17 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 18 f5 f6 19 ♖f4 with the initiative, Vidmar-Yates, London 1922; 14...♖e8!? 15 ♖f3 ♘e4 16 ♖h3 ♘f8 is more solid) 15 ♗h4 ♖e8 16 ♖f3 ♘e4 17 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 18 ♗xe4 dxe4 19 ♖g3 ♘f6 20 a4! b4 21 ♘d1 c3 22 bxc3 bxc3 23 ♖xc3 and White gradually won (Pillsbury-Janowski, Vienna 1898);

2) 11...♘e4!? 12 ♗f4 ♘xc3 13 bxc3 c4 14 ♗f5 (inferior is 14 ♗b1?! b5 15 ♘e5 a5 16 ♕f3 ♘xe5 17 ♗xe5 ♖a6! Euwe-Menchik, Carlsbad 1923) 14...g6 15 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 16 ♘e5 ♕e6 17 ♗h6 'with advantage to White' (Tartakower), although after 17...♖fe8 no particular advantage is apparent.

11...c4 (here too 11...♘e4 is not bad, but Tarrasch is playing for a win) **12 ♗b1 a6 13 ♘e5!**

The start of the classic Pillsbury Attack, about which it was later said: 'If Pillsbury has played ♘e5, then Black is lost.'



13...b5

White has the advantage after 13...♘xe5?! 14 dxe5 ♘d7 (14...♘e8? 15 ♗xe7 and ♘xd5; 14...♘e4? 15 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 16 ♘xd5 or 15...♘xc3 16 ♗xh7+!) 15 ♗f4! ♘c5 16 ♕d2 b5 17 ♖cd1 (Tartakower).

14 f4 ♖e8 15 ♕f3 ♘f8

An economic defence of the kingside – strictly according to Steinitz! – followed by a breakthrough on the queenside.

16 ♘e2?!

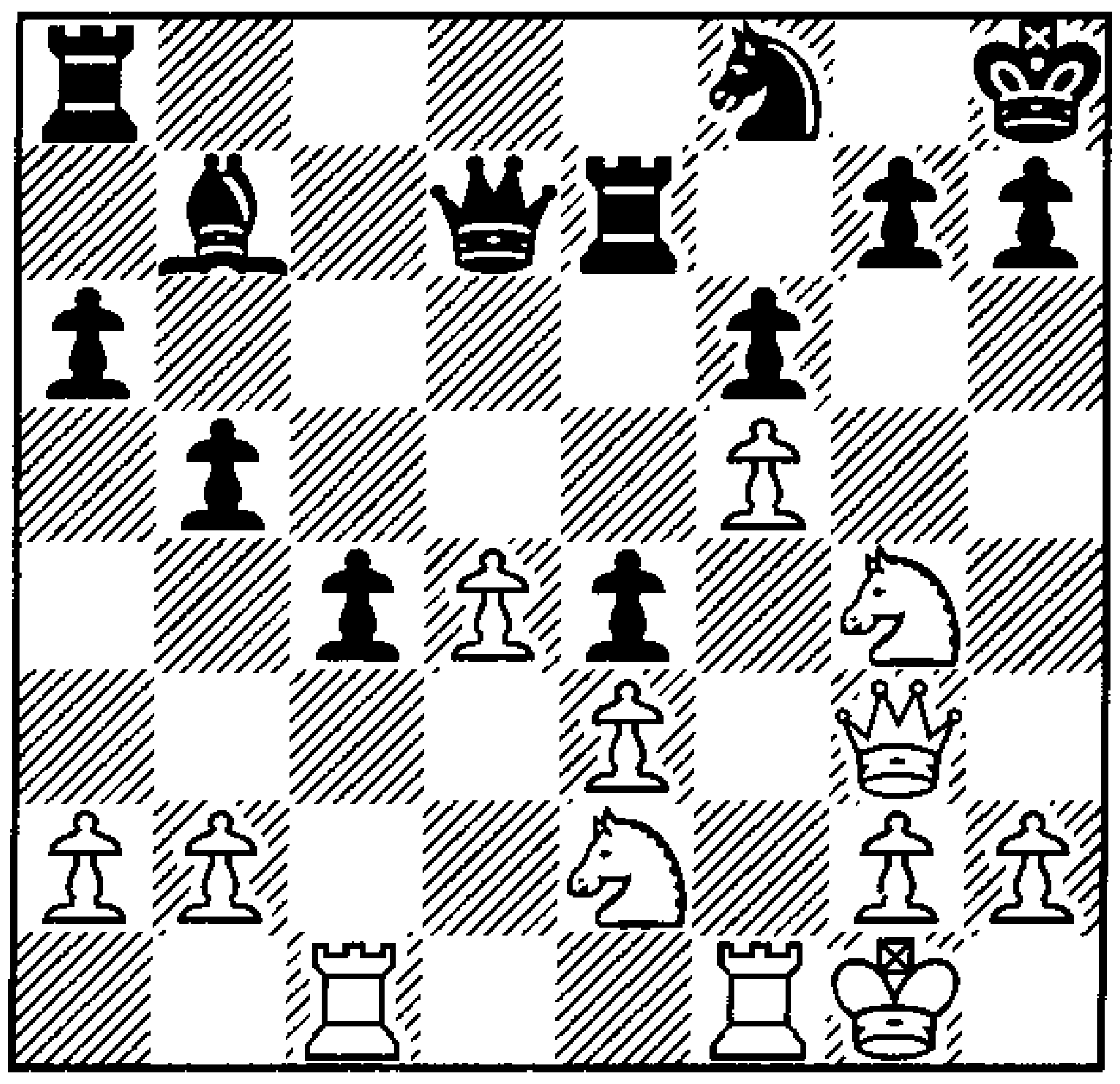
16 a3 would have maintained approximate equality, for example: 16...♘e4 17 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 18 ♘xe4 dxe4 19 ♕g3 (but not 19 ♗xe4?

♗xe4 20 ♕xe4 f6! and wins) 19...♕d6.

16...♘e4 (a typical relieving manoeuvre; 16...♕a5 17 ♘g3 ♗b4 18 ♖e2 is unclear) **17 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 18 ♗xe4 dxe4 19 ♕g3**

Inferior is 19 ♕h3?! f6 20 ♘g4 ♗c8.

19...f6 20 ♘g4 ♔h8 (♘xf6+ was threatened; if 20...f5? 21 ♘h6+ and ♘xf5) **21 f5 ♕d7 22 ♖f1**



22...♖d8?!

More accurate was the immediate 22...♖ae8 (supporting the e4-pawn) 23 ♖f4 ♗d5 with excellent counterplay on the queenside.

23 ♖f4 ♕d6 (23...♗d5 and ...b5-b4 was more energetic) **24 ♕h4 ♖de8 25 ♘c3 ♗d5**

For the moment 25...b4?! is unfavourable because of 26 ♘a4.

26 ♘f2

Pillsbury continues manoeuvring, not being tempted by the questionable 26 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 27 ♘xf6?! gxf6 28 ♕xf6+ ♖g7 29 ♕xa6 ♖a8 30 ♕f6 ♕g8 31 ♖f2 ♖xa2.

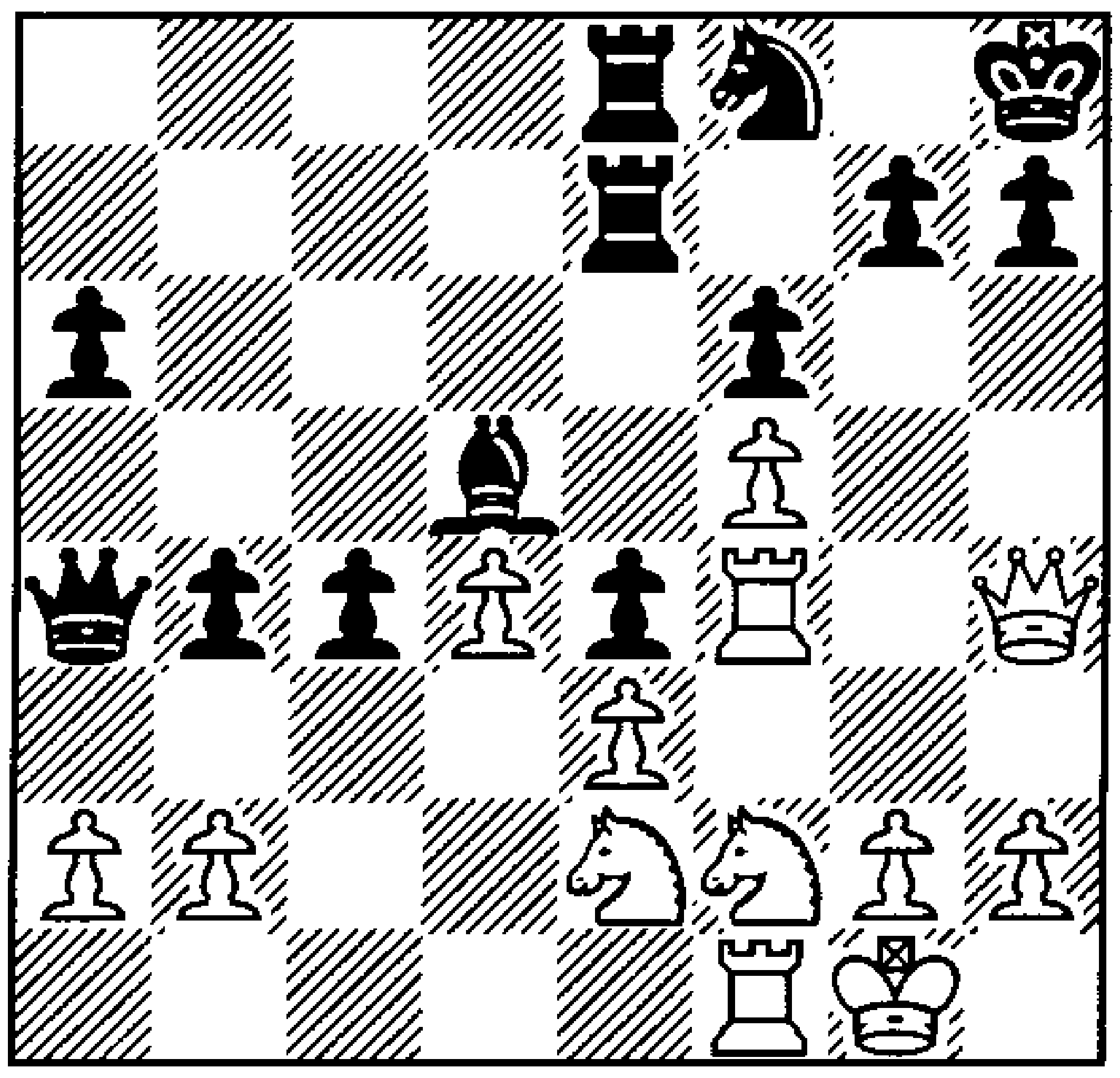
26...♕c6! 27 ♖f1 b4 28 ♘e2

Also after 28 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 29 ♖c1 Black would have been the first to begin: 29...c3! 30 bxc3 ♕xa2 31 cxb4 ♕d2 32 ♖d1 ♕xe3 etc.

28...♕a4?

Up till now, despite a few isolated irregularities, Tarrasch has played in sound positional style, but now, chasing after a pawn, he incorrectly moves his queen away from the defence of his king.

'28...c3! was essential, and if 29 bxc3 (29 b3 a5 30 ♘c1 a4!), then 29...♗c4 30 ♖e1 ♗xe2 31 ♖xe2 bxc3 32 ♖c2 ♕b5!' (Lasker) However, here 33 ♕g4! ♖c7 34 ♕d1 is completely unclear, and therefore I would have preferred 29...bxc3 30 ♘d1 (30 ♖c1? c2 31 a4 ♖b7 32 a5 ♖b1 wins for Black) 30...c2 31 ♘dc3 ♗c4 32 ♕e1 ♖b7 33 ♕d2 ♖b2 34 ♖c1 ♗xe2 35 ♘xe2 ♖c8 36 ♘g3 ♖xa2 37 ♘xe4 ♘d7, and the powerful passed c-pawn forces White to think primarily about defence.



29 ♘g4! (with the obvious intention of 29...♕xa2? 30 ♘xf6! gxf6 31 ♕xf6+ ♖g7 32 ♖g4 winning) **29...♘d7 30 ♖4f2!**

Making way for the knight.

30...♔g8

Now 30...♕xa2? is bad because of 31 ♘f4 – after 31...♗f7 White has two tempting possibilities:

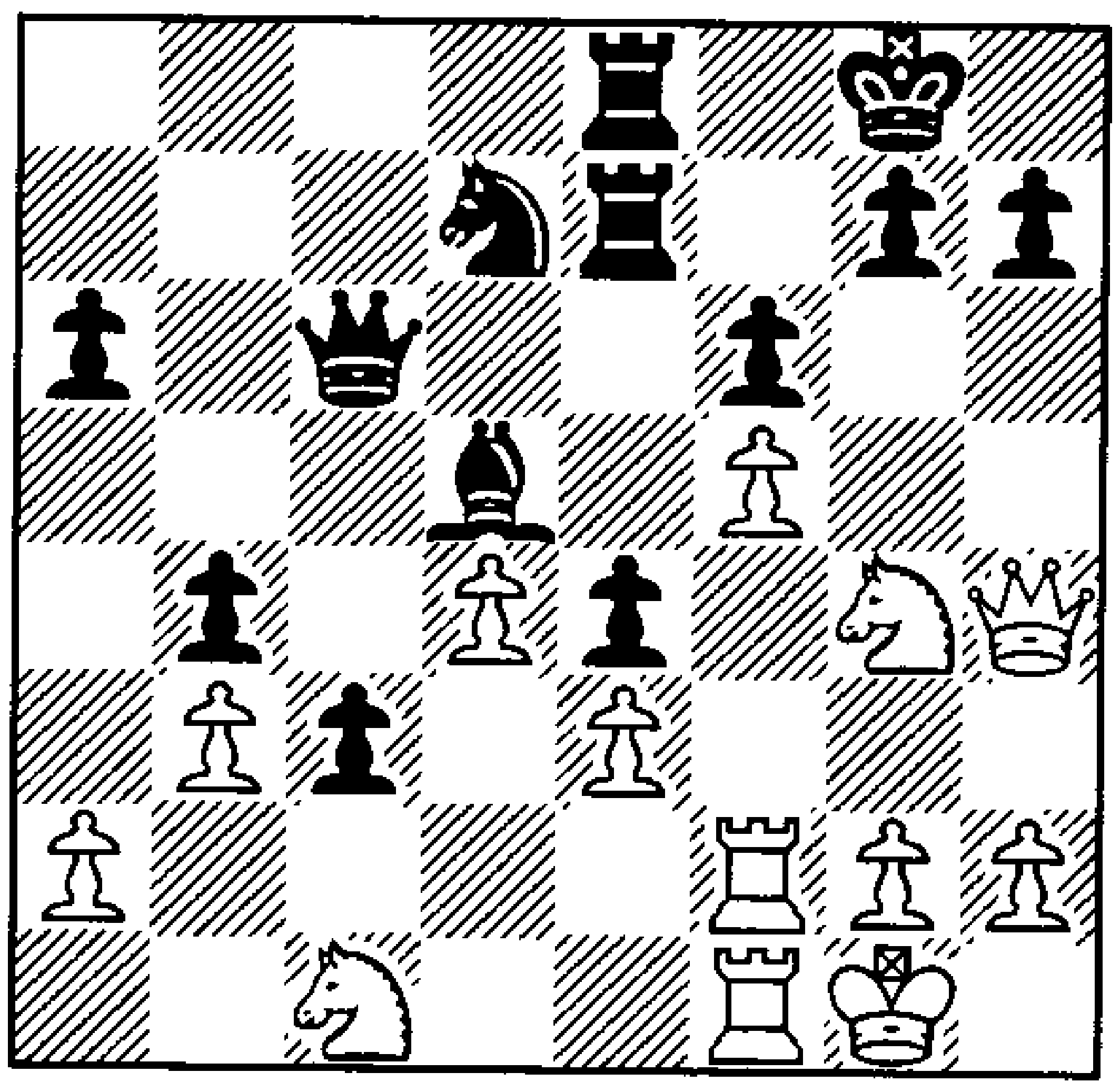
1) 32 ♘g6+ ♔g8! (but not 32...♗xg6? 33 fxg6 h6 34 ♘xh6! gxh6 35 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 36 ♖f4 or 33...♘f8 34 ♘xf6 gxf6 35 ♖xf6 and ♖f7 and White wins in each case) 33 ♘xe7+ ♖xe7 34 ♕g3 ♔f8 – after pointing out this defence, Chigorin asked: 'Do not Black's two passed pawns, of course after ...♕b3 or ...♕a4-b5(c6) and ...a6-a5, prove decisive as regards White's fate?' I would answer: hardly. After 35 ♕d6! ♕a5 36 ♖c2 ♘b6 37 ♖cc1 ♕b5 38 ♖a1 (38 ♖f4 ♘c8 39 ♕d8+ ♖e8 40 ♕c7 ♘e7 is unclear) 38...♘a4 39 ♘f2 a5 40 ♘d1 ♗h5 41 ♖f4 White has sufficient counterplay;

2) 32 d5! ♘e5 33 ♘xf6 gxf6 34 ♕xf6+

♔g8 35 d6 ♖d7 36 ♘e6 and wins (Tartakower), or 32...♖c8 33 ♘g6+! ♗xg6 34 fxg6 (34 d6 is also good, for example: 34...♖ee8 35 fxg6 ♘f8 36 d7 or 34...♗xf5 35 dxe7 ♗g6 36 ♖d2) 34...♘f8 35 ♘xf6 gxf6 36 ♖xf6 ♘xg6 37 ♖xg6 ♕xb2 38 ♕xe7 with a won game.

31 ♘c1 c3 32 b3 ♕c6

With nothing to show for his pains...



Black's new plan has taken shape: ...a5-a4xb3 and ...♖a8-a3, destroying the opponent's queenside. White's sole hope is to storm the king's fortress, and Pillsbury does this with enormous energy, inventiveness and mastery.

33 h3!

Signalling the start of the offensive. 'At first sight there is no danger threatening Black. Moreover, the advantage is on his side: for the passed c-pawn there are only two more steps to the queening square. But White, after calculating the variations with mathematical precision, calmly and literally tempo by tempo develops his attack.' (Gunsberg)

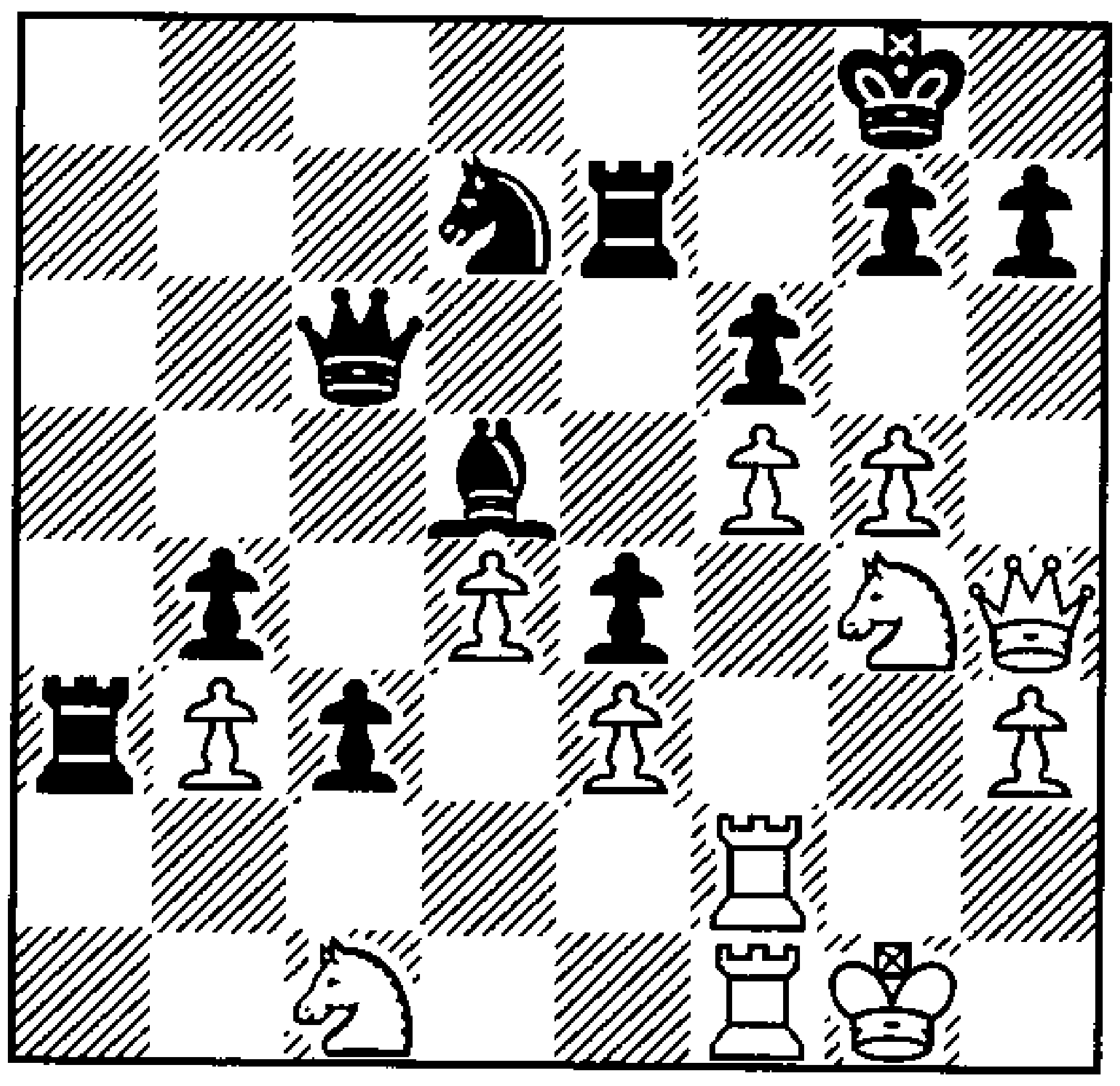
33...a5 34 ♘h2 a4 35 g4! axb3?!

In my opinion, 35...h6!? was more circumspect.

36 axb3 ♖a8 (36...h6!? 37 ♖a2 ♖a8) **37 g5 ♖a3**

Consistently playing for a win. After 37...fxg5 38 ♕xg5 ♘f6 (38...♕f6 39 ♕g3 intending ♘g4) 39 ♘g4 ♕d6 40 ♖g2! White can breathe more easily: for the moment his b3-pawn is not hanging.

38 ♘g4



38...♗xb3?

But strong here was the prophylactic 38...fxg5! (38...♔h8?! 39 ♖g2; 38...♖xb3? 39 ♘xb3 ♗xb3 40 ♖g2 ♔h8 41 gxf6 gxf6 42 ♘e5! ♘xe5 43 dxe5 and wins) 39 ♕xg5 ♘f6 40 ♖g2 ♔f8! (Chigorin), for example: 41 ♘e5 ♕a6! 42 h4 (42 ♘e2? ♖a1!) 42...♗xb3 43 h5 ♗c4 44 h6?! ♗xf1 45 hxg7+ ♔g8 46 ♘g4 ♘xg4 47 ♕xe7 ♕c8 48 ♖xg4 ♗h3 49 ♕xb4 ♗xg4 50 ♕xa3 ♕xf5 51 ♕xc3 ♕f3, and this wild confrontation concludes to Black's advantage.

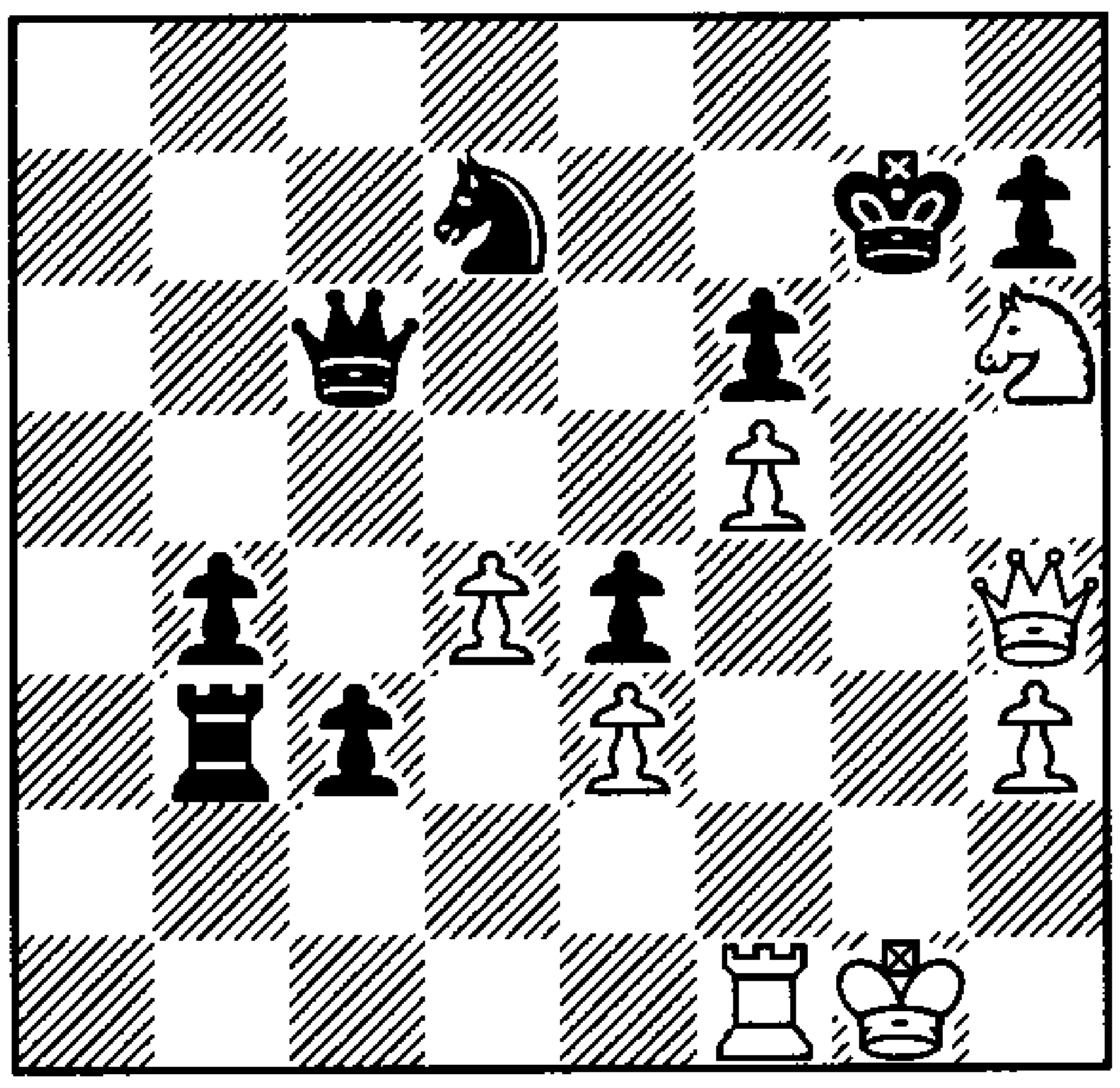
39 ♖g2! ♔h8 (it is now too late for 39...fxg5 40 ♕xg5 ♔f8 in view of 41 f6!) **40 gxf6 gxf6?!**

'If 40...♘xf6 White wins by 41 ♘e5 ♕d6 42 ♘g6+ ♔g8 43 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 44 ♘xb3 ♖xb3 45 ♔h1 ♖a3 46 ♖fg1 ♖a6 47 ♖xg7+ ♕xg7 48 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 49 ♕g3+, and Black is unable to advance either his b-pawn or his c-pawn without losing one of them.' (Chigorin)

An important refinement: after 46...♖a6? there is 47 ♕h6!, and Black also fails to save the game with 46...♔f8 47 ♖xg7! ♕xg7 48 ♖xg7 ♔xg7 49 ♕g3+ ♔f7 50 ♕c7+ ♔g8 51 ♕c4+ ♔g7 52 ♕xb4 ♖a1+ 53 ♔g2 ♖a2+ 54 ♔g3 c2 55 ♕b7+ ♔h6 56 ♕c8! ♔g7 57 ♔f4. However, after 45...c2! (instead of 45...♖a3?) 46 ♖xc2 ♖xe3 47 ♖c8+ ♔f7 48 ♖fc1 ♖c3 49 ♖1xc3 bxc3 50 ♖xc3 ♕a7 Black would have had a chance of holding on (51 ♕g3 ♕a1+ 52 ♔g2 ♕b2+ 53 ♔f1 ♕b5+ is equal).

41 ♘xb3 ♖xb3 42 ♘h6 ♖g7 (if 42...♕c8 or 42...♕d5, then 43 ♕g4) **43 ♖xg7 ♔xg7**

It appears that White's attack has petered out and that the black pawns are about to have their say...



44 ♕g3+!

A highly unpleasant surprise! 44 ♔h1? ♕c4 45 ♖g1+ ♔f8 46 ♖g8+ ♕xg8 47 ♘xg8 c2 would have led to directly the opposite result.

44...♔xh6 (44...♔f8? 45 ♕g8+ and ♕xb3) **45 ♔h1!**

With the deadly threat of ♖g1, whereas 45 ♖f4? ♖b1+ 46 ♔g2 ♖b2+ would have led only to a draw.

45...♕d5

If 45...c2?, then 46 ♖g1 c1♕ 47 ♕h4 mate. Black also fails to save the game by 45...♘f8 46 ♖g1 ♕e8 47 ♕g7+ ♔h5 48 ♕xf6 ♘e6 49 fxe6.

46 ♖g1 ♕xf5 47 ♕h4+ ♕h5 48 ♕f4+ ♕g5 49 ♖xg5 fxg5 50 ♕d6+ ♔h5

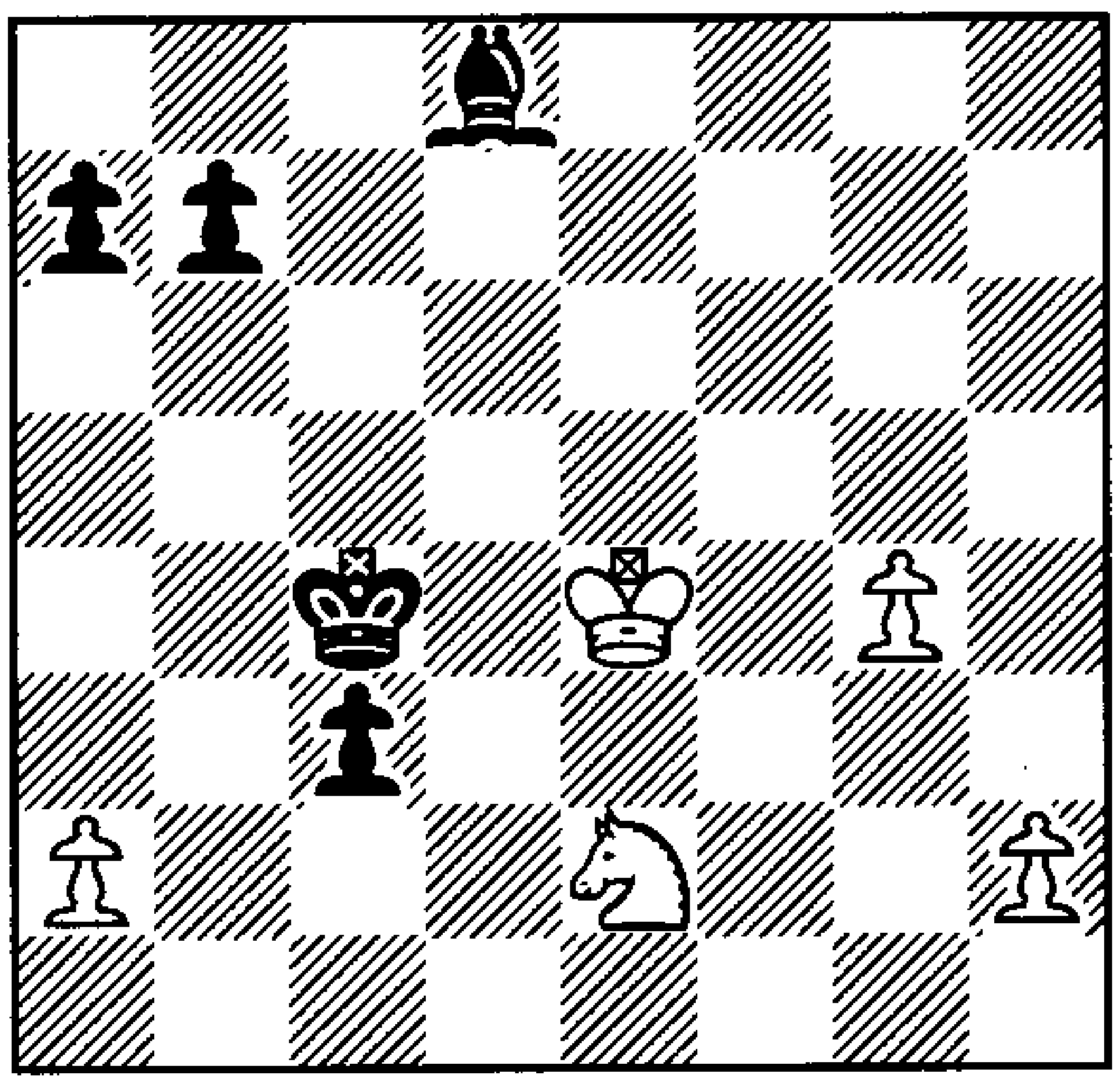
'The tragedy for Black is that after either king move White captures the knight either with check, or with the threat of an immediate mate, thereby forestalling ...c3-c2.' (Réti)

51 ♕xd7 c2?! (avoiding the agonising 51...♖b1+ 52 ♔h2 ♖b2+ 53 ♔g3 ♔g6 54 ♕e6+ etc.) **52 ♕xh7 mate**

Chigorin and the newly-fledged world champion Lasker performed no less brilliantly in Hastings. Three rounds before the finish the position of the leaders was as follows: Lasker – 14½ out of 18(!); Chigorin – 14; Pillsbury – 13½; Tarrasch – 11 etc.

At this point there occurred the first meeting of the fundamental opponents – Tarrasch and Lasker, which greatly influenced the outcome of the entire tournament. With Black the champion erected the currently fashionable 'Berlin Wall' **1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6 4 0-0 ♘xe4 5 d4 ♘d6 6 ♗xc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 ♘f5 8 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8** – *Game No.47*), but White went all out for a win, and the battle in this seemingly tedious endgame became extremely sharp.

Game 39
S.Tarrasch-Em.Lasker
Hastings 1895, 19th round



41 ♔f5?!

A desperate move! If 41 ♘d4 b5 42 ♘c2 b4 43 ♘e3+ ♔c5 the bishop is stronger than the knight; White was also not satisfied with the drawn but unpleasant queen ending a pawn down after 41 ♘xc3 ♔xc3 42 ♔f5 b5 43 g5 ♗xg5 44 ♔xg5 ♔b2 45 h4 ♔xa2 46 h5 b4 47 h6 b3 48 h7 b2 50 h8♕ b1♕.

41...♔d3??

Lasker, Tarrasch and other commentators thought that 41...c2! would have given Black only a draw: 42 g5 ♗xg5 43 ♔xg5 ♔d3 44 ♘c1+ ♔d2 45 ♘b3+ ♔d1 46 a4 (46 h4 b5! 47 h5 a5 48 h6 a4) 46...a5 47 ♔f5 (47 h4 b5!)

47...b5 48 axb5 a4 49 ♘c1 ♔xc1 50 b6 a3 51 b7 a2 52 b8♕ a1♕ 53 ♕f4+ ♔b1 54 ♕e4 'etc.' However, after 54...♕c3 he wins! Those wishing to learn the winning method can look in Averbakh's *Comprehensive Chess Endings...*

42 ♘xc3! (now there is no stopping the passed pawns) **42...♔xc3 43 g5 ♗b6 44 h4 ♗d4 45 h5 b5 46 h6 b4 47 g6 a5 48 g7 a4 49 g8♕ 1-0**

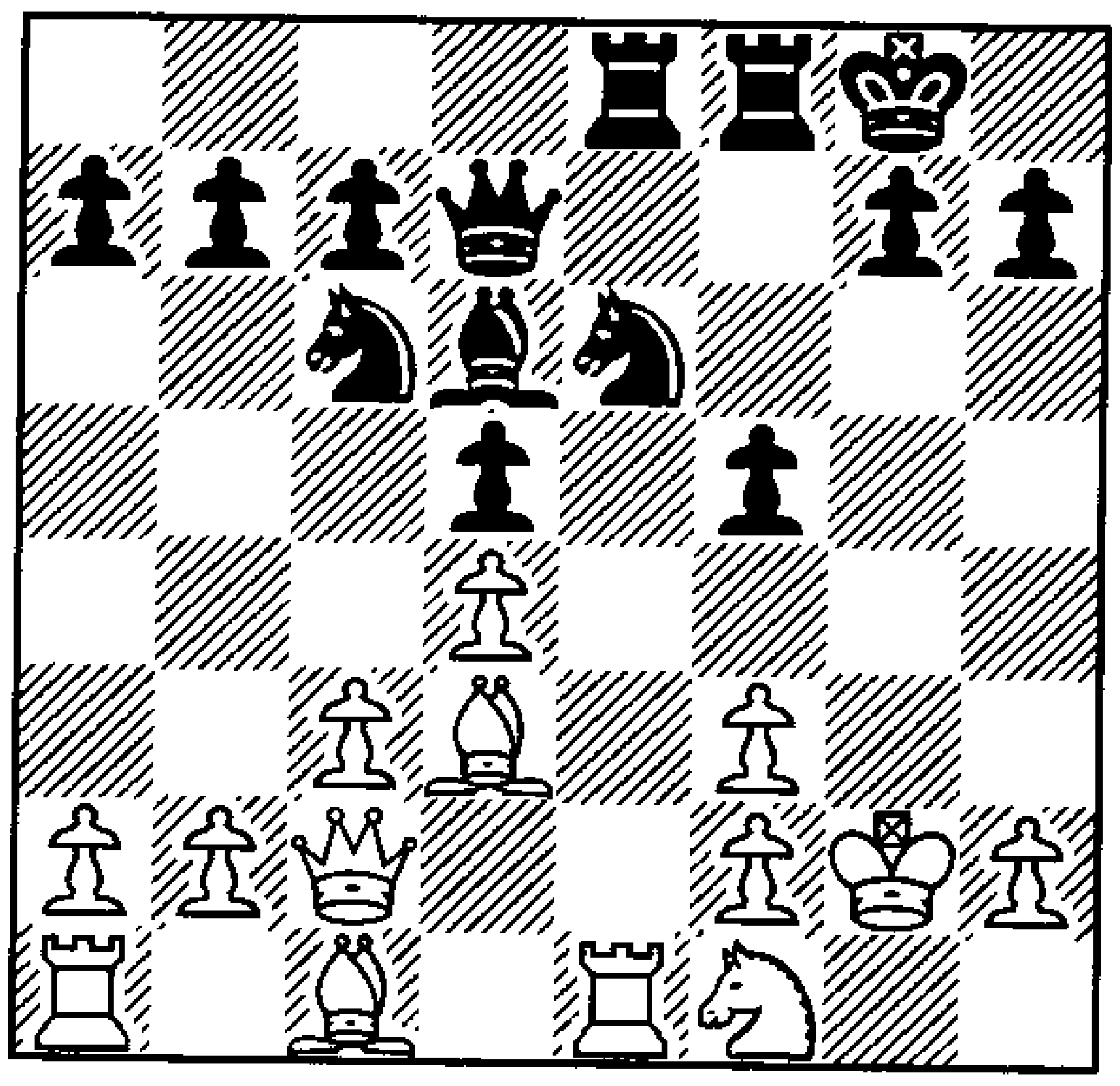
In the following round Chigorin also crashed, losing in 16 moves to Janowski (*Game No.32*). But Pillsbury won his three concluding games and, to general astonishment, finished first, ahead of the entire formidable 'star quartet'! Chigorin was half a point behind, Lasker a point, and Tarrasch and Steinitz even further...

Thus Hastings 1895 did not clarify the situation at the top, but further confused it: the world champion did not manage to demonstrate his superiority, and in addition a new challenger appeared. 'Pillsbury is a brilliant player, and his play is full of deep ideas,' wrote Tarrasch. 'But in my view it was the famous Russian master Chigorin who played best of all... The third prize-winner Lasker showed for the first time that he too is a very strong player. All his previous successes were exaggerated by unparalleled publicity...'

It was a pity that the fourth prize-winner Tarrasch, again citing busyness at work, avoided a decisive fight with his rivals in the St Petersburg match-tournament (1895/96). This was the first super-elite competition in history, a kind of prototype of the world championship match-tournament of 1948. The four strongest – Lasker, Steinitz, Chigorin and Pillsbury – played one another six times. Need it be said what prestige and what rights would be acquired in the eyes of the chess world by the winner of such a battle?!

The first half of the match-tournament developed into a fierce race between Pillsbury and Lasker. Initially the lead was seized by the energetic 23-year-old American. He was paired against the world champion in the very first round. As White Lasker played extremely badly against a Petroff Defence and suffered an opening catastrophe.

Game 40
Em.Lasker-H.Pillsbury
St Petersburg 1895/96, 1st round



17...♘exd4! 18 ♕d1 ♖xe1 19 ♕xe1 ♘xf3!! 20 ♔xf3

If 20 ♕d1, then 20...♘ce5.

20...f4! (20...♘e5+!? 21 ♔e2 ♕e8 is also good) **21 ♕d1**

After 21 ♔e2 ♖e8+ 22 ♘e3 fxe3 23 fxe3 there is the spectacular 23...♘d4+!! (23...♕g4+ 24 ♔d2 ♘d4! is also possible) 24 ♔d1 (24 cxd4 ♕g4+ 25 ♔d2 ♗b4+ or 25 ♔f2 ♖f8+) 24...♕a4+ 25 b3 ♘xb3 and wins.

21...♘e5+ 22 ♔e2 ♕g4+ 23 ♔d2 ♕xd1+ 24 ♔xd1 ♘xd3

... Black won.

In the second cycle Pillsbury again defeated Lasker(!), this time in a classic ending with knight against bishop (cf. the note to the ninth move in *Game No.55*), and in the third cycle he gained a draw without particular anxiety, once more in a Petroff Defence. Apart from that he crushed Chigorin three times and only the 'old lion' Steinitz withstood the American's pressure. In turn, Lasker scored 2½ out of 3 against Steinitz and Chigorin, and after three cycles the scores were as follows:

Pillsbury – 6½ out of 9; Lasker 5½; Steinitz – 4½; Chigorin – 1½.

Halfway through the tournament a five-day break was announced. The participants greeted the New Year and – as Tarrasch had done a couple of years earlier, when he played his match in St Petersburg with Chigorin – later remembered for a long time the extraordinary hospitality of the organisers together with all the delights of life in the Capital. The latter, however, did not apply to Chigorin, who, as director of the St Petersburg Chess Society, bore a heavy burden of administrative problems throughout the tournament...

And then came the day of the fourth meeting between the leader and the world champion, 4 January 1896. Had Pillsbury won – and he was playing White – the outcome of the match-tournament was would have been practically decided. The ultra-talented American would have clearly become the No.1 challenger, and Lasker would possibly have had to play an official match with him for the world championship, under conditions highly unfavourable for him... But things turned out differently.

Game 41

H.Pillsbury-Em.Lasker

St Petersburg 1895/96, 10th round

Queen's Gambit D50

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 c5 5 ♗g5

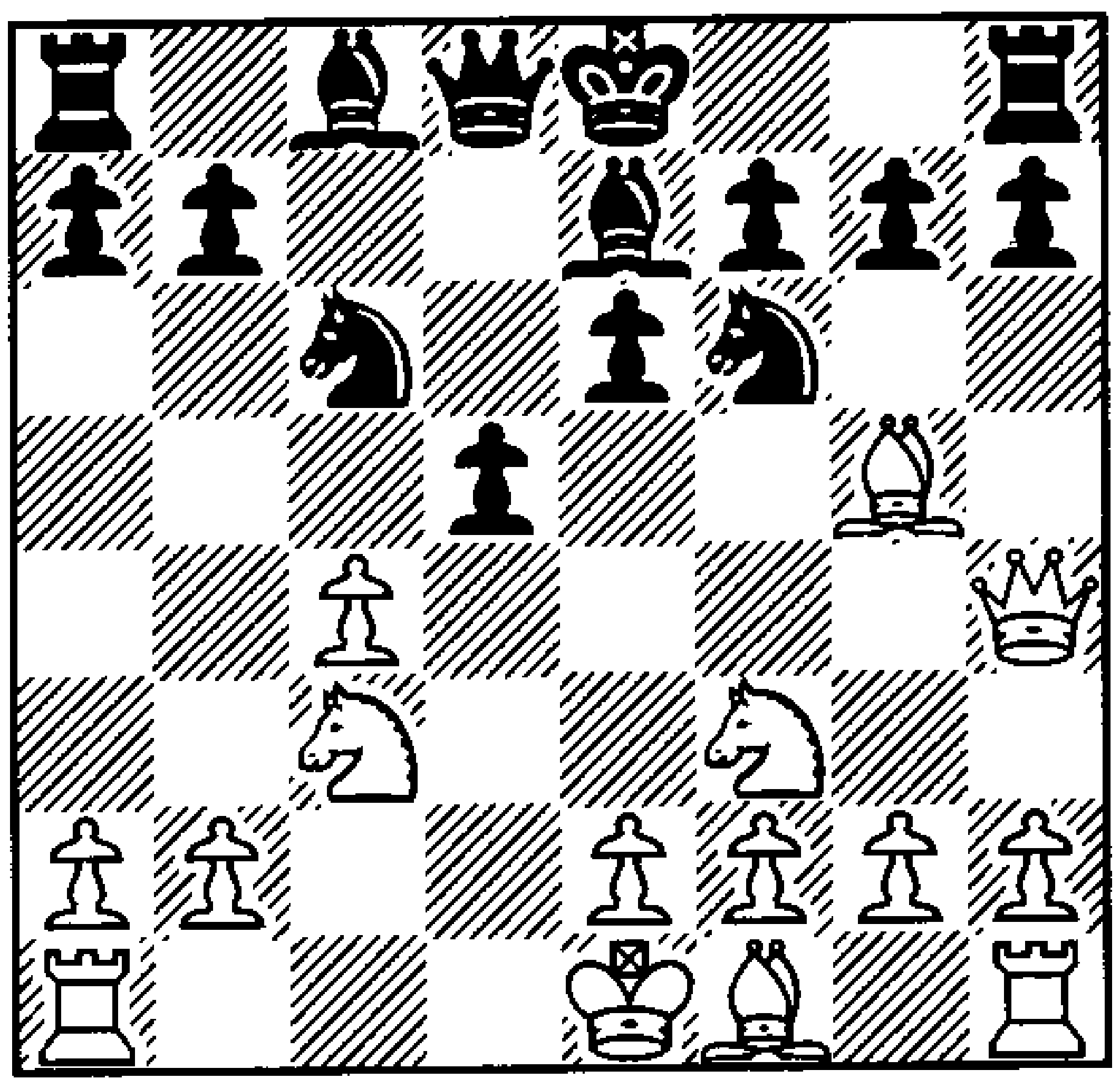
Pillsbury's favourite move. Nowadays 5 cxd5 or 5 e3 is preferred.

5...cxd4 6 ♕xd4 (after 6 ♘xd4, as was established only in the 20th century, 6...e5 equalises) **6...♘c6**

Quieter is 6...♗e7!? (Lasker) 7 cxd5 exd5 8 e3 ♘c6 and ...0-0.

7 ♕h4?! (7 ♗xf6! is correct – *Game No.42*) **7...♗e7**

The pedigree of this variation extends from the game Blackburne-Schowalter (New York 1889), which went 7...d4? 8 0-0-0 e5 9 e3 ♗c5 10 exd4 exd4 11 ♘d5 ♕a5 12 ♗xf6 gxf6 13 ♘xf6+ ♔f8 14 ♖e1 ♗e6 15 ♖xe6! fxe6 16 ♕h6+ with crushing threats.



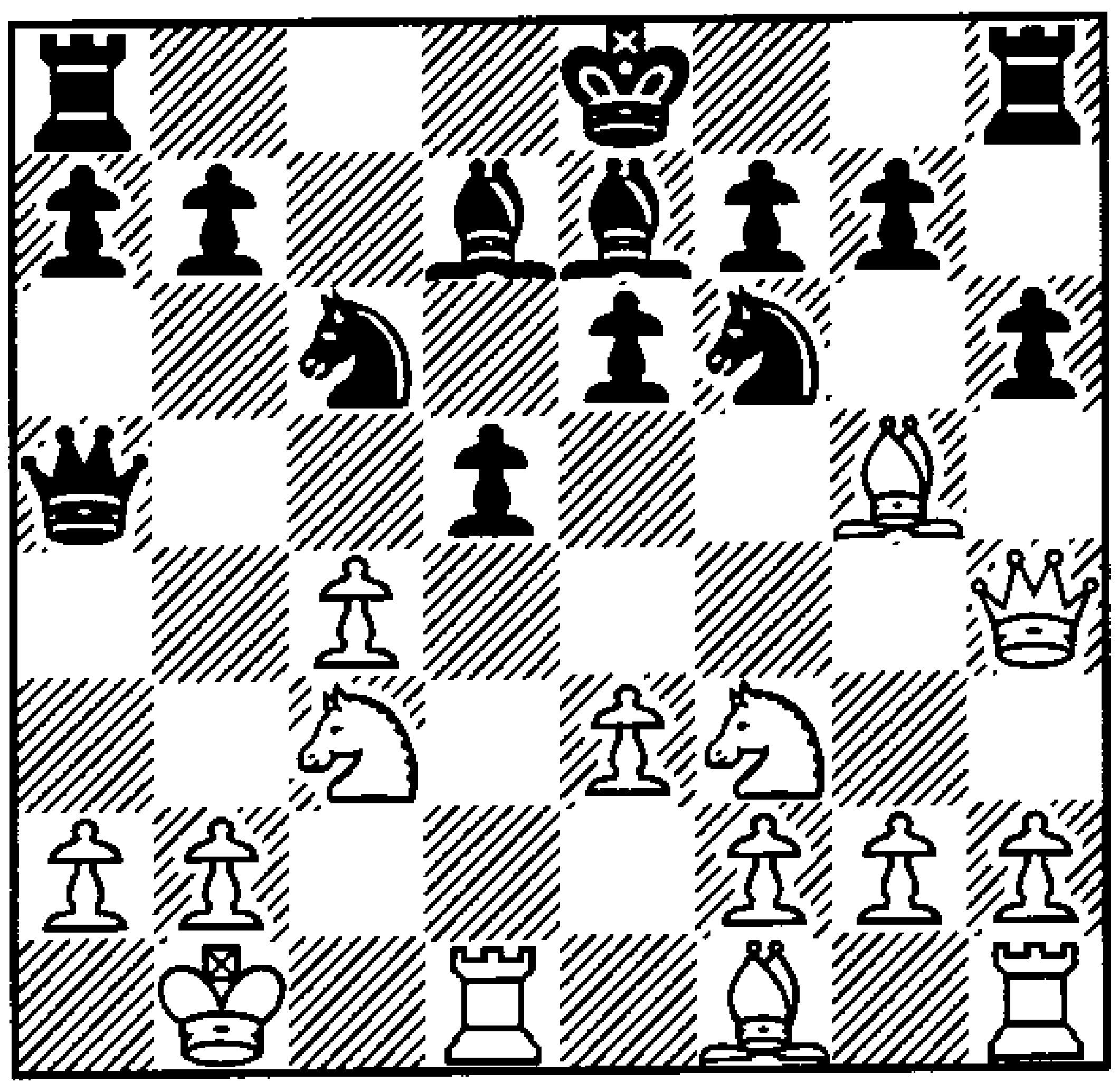
8 0-0-0?!

A risky idea. However, if 8 e3, then 8...♕b6 is unpleasant, for example: 9 ♖b1 h6! 10 ♗d3 dxc4 11 ♗xc4 0-0, and 12 ♗xh6?! gxh6 13 ♕xh6 is bad in view of 13...♕c5! Instead 8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♖d1 is perhaps more solid, but it was not for this that Pillsbury played 5 ♗g5 and 6 ♕xd4.

8...♕a5 9 e3

In one of the simultaneous displays he gave in 1900, Lasker risked 9 cxd5 exd5 10 e3 ♗e6 11 ♘d4 ♖c8 12 ♔b1 h6 13 ♘xe6 fxe6 14 ♕h3 ♔f7 15 ♗f4, but he could have paid for this in the event of 15...♘b4! 16 a3 ♖xc3!

9...♗d7 10 ♔b1 h6!

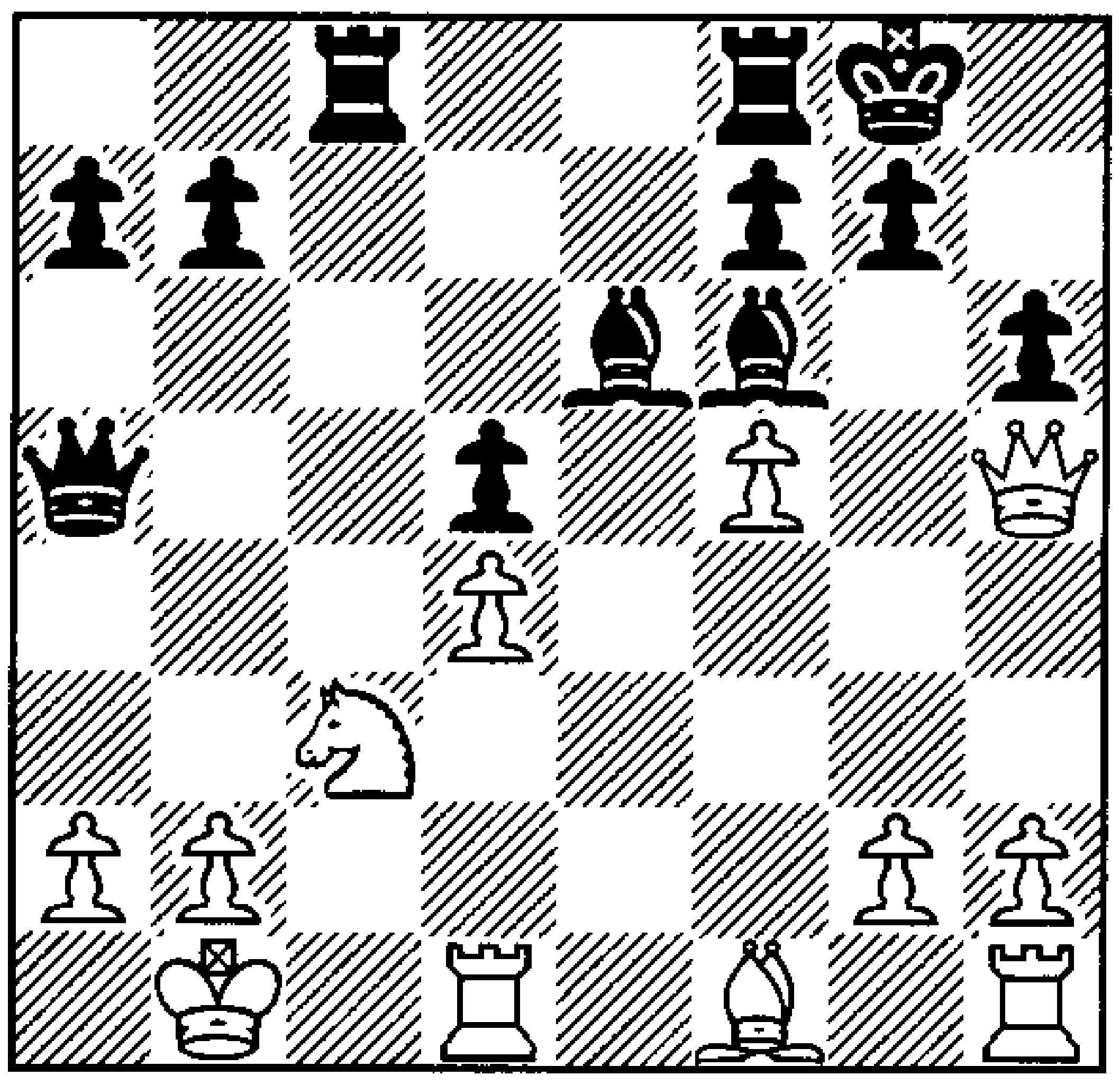


'A seemingly simple, but basically brilliant move.' (B. Vainstein) 'Thus either the bishop must be exchanged or the white queen stay where it is.' (Lasker)

11 cxd5 exd5 12 ♘d4 0-0! 13 ♗xf6 (if 13 ♗xh6?! gxh6 14 ♕xh6 there is the adequate reply 14...♘e4) **13...♗xf6 14 ♕h5**

Not even contemplating the restrained 14 ♕g3.

14...♘xd4 15 exd4 ♗e6! (Lasker already knows how to reply to the advance of the f-pawn) **16 f4** (16 ♘e4? ♗xd4!; 16 ♗c4 ♖fd8! and ...♖ac8) **16...♖ac8 17 f5**



17...♖xc3!!

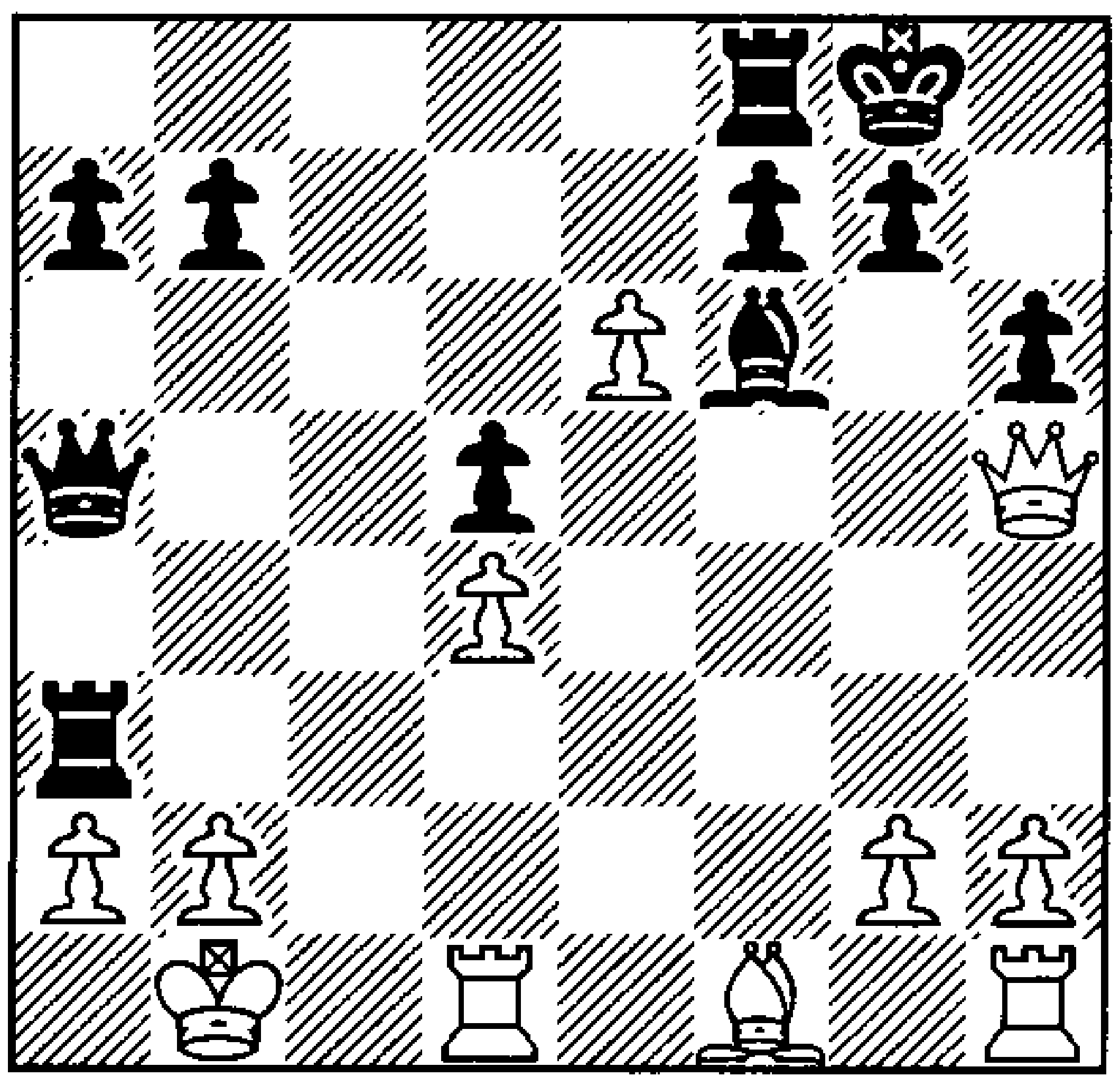
A fine, deeply calculated combination, which any grandmaster could be proud of even today. It is beyond the powers of even a strong computer – here additional forces are needed... Whereas after the prosaic 17...♗d7 18 ♕f3 the chances would have become double-edged.

18 fxe6

Pillsbury avoids 18 bxc3, not wishing to go into a depressing endgame with problematic drawing chances after 18...♕xc3 19 ♕f3! (19 fxe6? ♕b4+ and ...♖c8) 19...♕xf3! (less clear is 19...♕b4+ 20 ♕b3 ♗xf5+ 21 ♗d3 ♕xb3+ 22 axb3 ♗g4 23 ♖d2 ♗xd4 24 ♗c2 ♗f6 25 ♖xd5 ♖c8 26 ♗f5) 20 gxf3 ♗xf5+ 21 ♗d3 ♗h3. Or perhaps he had noticed the unexpected quiet move 18...♗d7!!, when after 19 ♕f3 ♖c8 Black has a decisive attack: 20 ♖c1 ♗xd4 21 cxd4 ♗xf5+ and ...♕b4+; 20 ♔b2 ♗xf5 21 ♗e2 ♗e4 22 ♕h3 ♖c6; 20 ♖d3 ♗b5 21 ♖e3 ♗xd4 22 ♗xb5 (22 cxd4 ♕b4+ 23 ♖b3 ♕e1+) 22...♕xb5+ 23 ♔a1 ♗xe3 (pr 23...♗f6!? 24 ♖b1 ♕c5 25 ♖xb7 d4) 24 ♕xe3 ♕c4 25 ♔b2 ♖c6.

18...♖a3!!

The point of the combination! This paradoxical rook sacrifice forces the white king to begin a fight for its own existence.

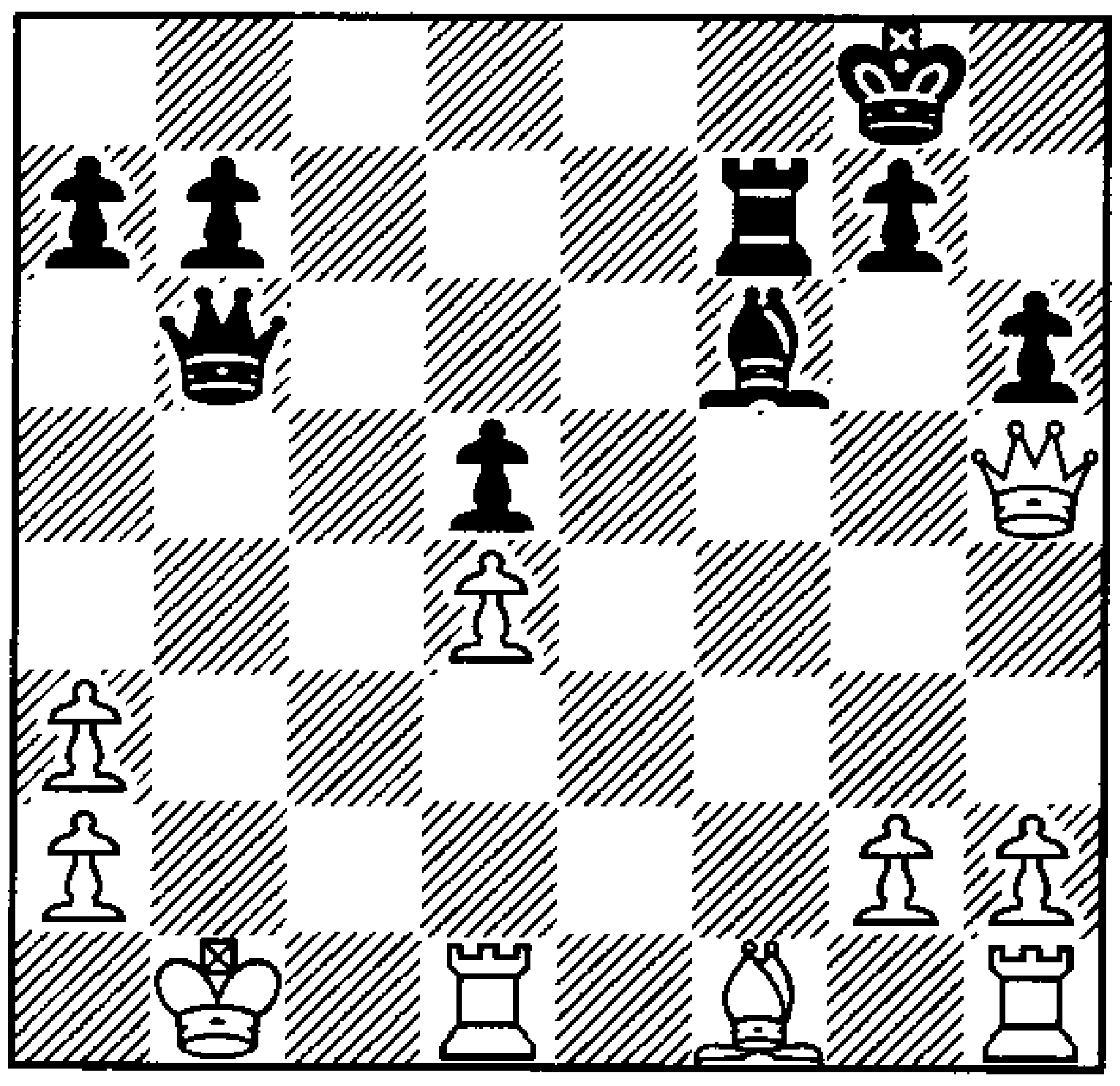


19 exf7+?

The seemingly tempting 19 e7? also fails to disrupt the coordination of the black pieces – 19...♖e8! (after 19...♖c8?? 20 ♕f5! the queen returns to the defence) 20 bxa3 ♕b6+ 21 ♔c2 (21 ♔a1 ♗xd4+ and ...♖xe7) 21...♖c8+ 22 ♔d2 ♗xd4 and White has no defence: 23 e8♕+ ♖xe8 24 ♗d3 ♕a5+ 25 ♔c1 ♖c8+ or 23 ♔e2 ♕e6+ 24 ♔f3 ♕e3+ 25 ♔g4 g6! 26 ♕xd5 h5+ with mate.

It also seems hopeless to play 19 bxa3! ♕b6+ 20 ♔c2 (20 ♔a1? ♗xd4+ 21 ♖xd4 ♕xd4+ 22 ♔b1 fxe6! 23 ♗e2 ♕e4+ 24 ♔a1 ♖f2 with a winning attack: 25 ♖e1 ♕d4+ 26 ♔b1 ♕d2) 20...♖c8+ 21 ♔d2 ♕xd4+ 22 ♔e1 (22 ♗d3? ♖c2+!! 23 ♔xc2 ♕b2 mate) 22...♕c3+, but the e6-pawn serves as a shield for the king and by the sequence 23 ♔e2 ♕c2+ 24 ♖d2 ♕e4+ 25 ♔d1! (but not instead 25 ♔f2? when the continuation is 25...♗d4+ 26 ♔g3 ♖c3+) 25...♕b1+ 26 ♔e2 or 23 ♖d2 ♕e3+ (23...fxe6 24 ♕e2 ♗g5 25 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 26 ♕e2 ♕a1+) 24 ♔d1 ♗b2 25 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 26 ♗c4! ♖xc4 27 ♕f8+ ♔h7 28 ♕f5+ White gains a draw.

19...♖xf7 20 bxa3 ♕b6+



21 ♗b5!

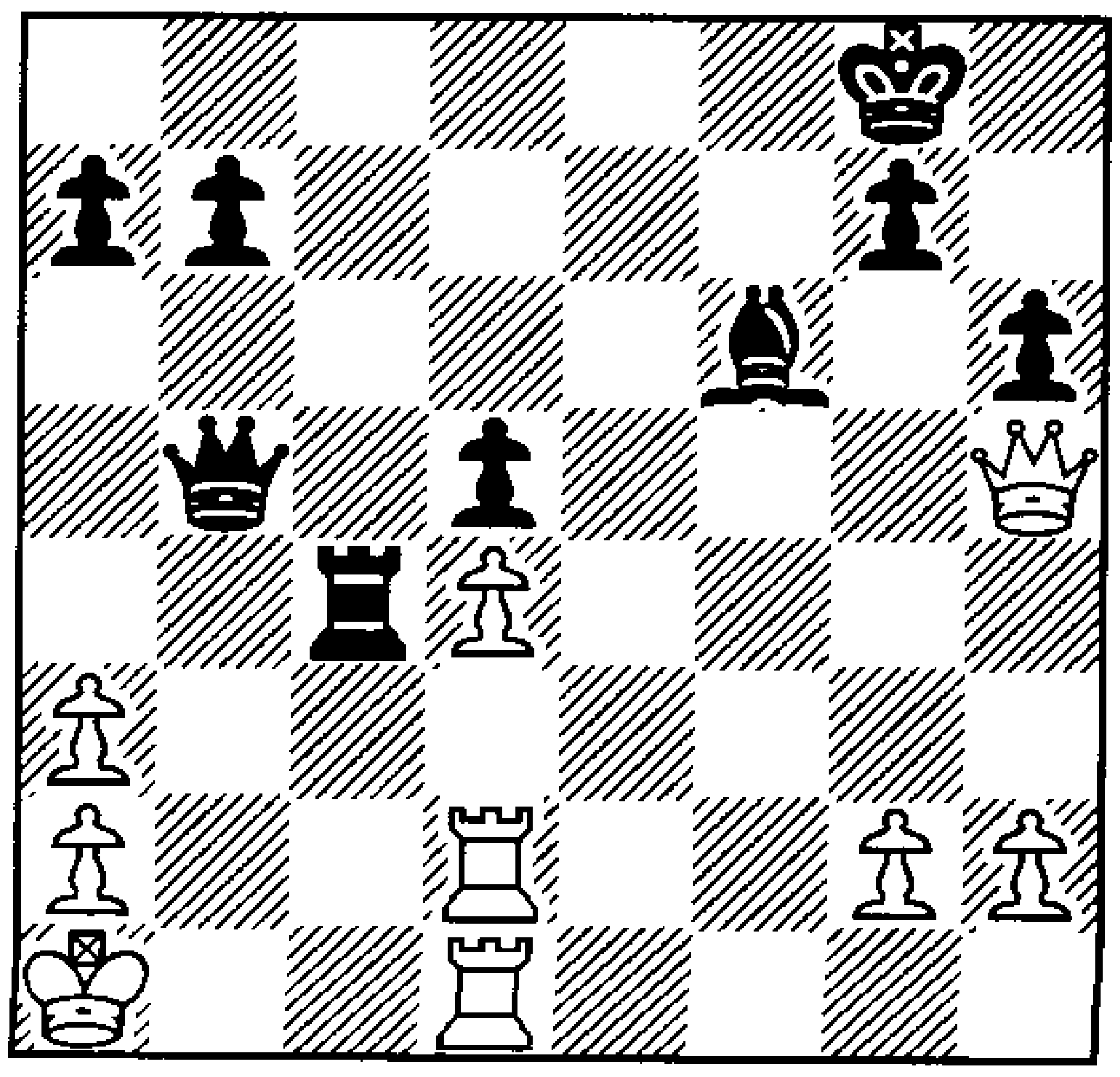
The best chance. Both 21 ♔a1 ♗xd4+ and 21 ♔c2 ♖c7+ 22 ♔d2 ♕xd4+ 23 ♔e1 ♕c3+! 24 ♖d2 ♖e7+ 25 ♗e2 ♗g5 were hopeless.

21...♕xb5+ 22 ♔a1 ♖c7?

What a pity... After spending masses of energy and creative effort, Lasker misses a simple win – 22...♕c4!, for example: 23 ♖d2 ♕c3+ or 23 ♕g4 ♖e7! (threatening ...♖e4 or ...♖e2) 24 ♖he1 ♗xd4+ 25 ♕xd4 ♖xe1 etc.

23 ♖d2 ♖c4 24 ♖hd1?

An error in reply. 24 ♕e2?! ♕b6! 25 ♖hd1 ♖xd4 26 ♖xd4 ♗xd4+ 27 ♖xd4 ♕xd4+ 28 ♔b1 ♕e4+ was also poor, but a pretty draw would have resulted from 24 ♖e1! ♕a5! (24...♖xd4? 25 ♖e8+ ♔h7 26 ♕f5+ g6 27 ♕xf6 ♕xe8 28 ♕xd4 wins for White) 25 ♖e8+ ♔h7 26 ♕f5+ g6 27 ♖e7+!! (27 ♕xf6?? ♖c1+ 28 ♔b2 ♕c3 mate) 27...♗xe7 28 ♕f7+ ♔h8 29 ♕e8+ ♔g7 30 ♕e7+ with perpetual.



24...♖c3?

Another serious mistake, which was also not pointed out by the commentators. 24...♕c6! would have won, for example: 25 ♔b1 ♗g5 26 ♕e2 ♗xd2 27 ♕xd2 ♕d6 etc.

25 ♕f5

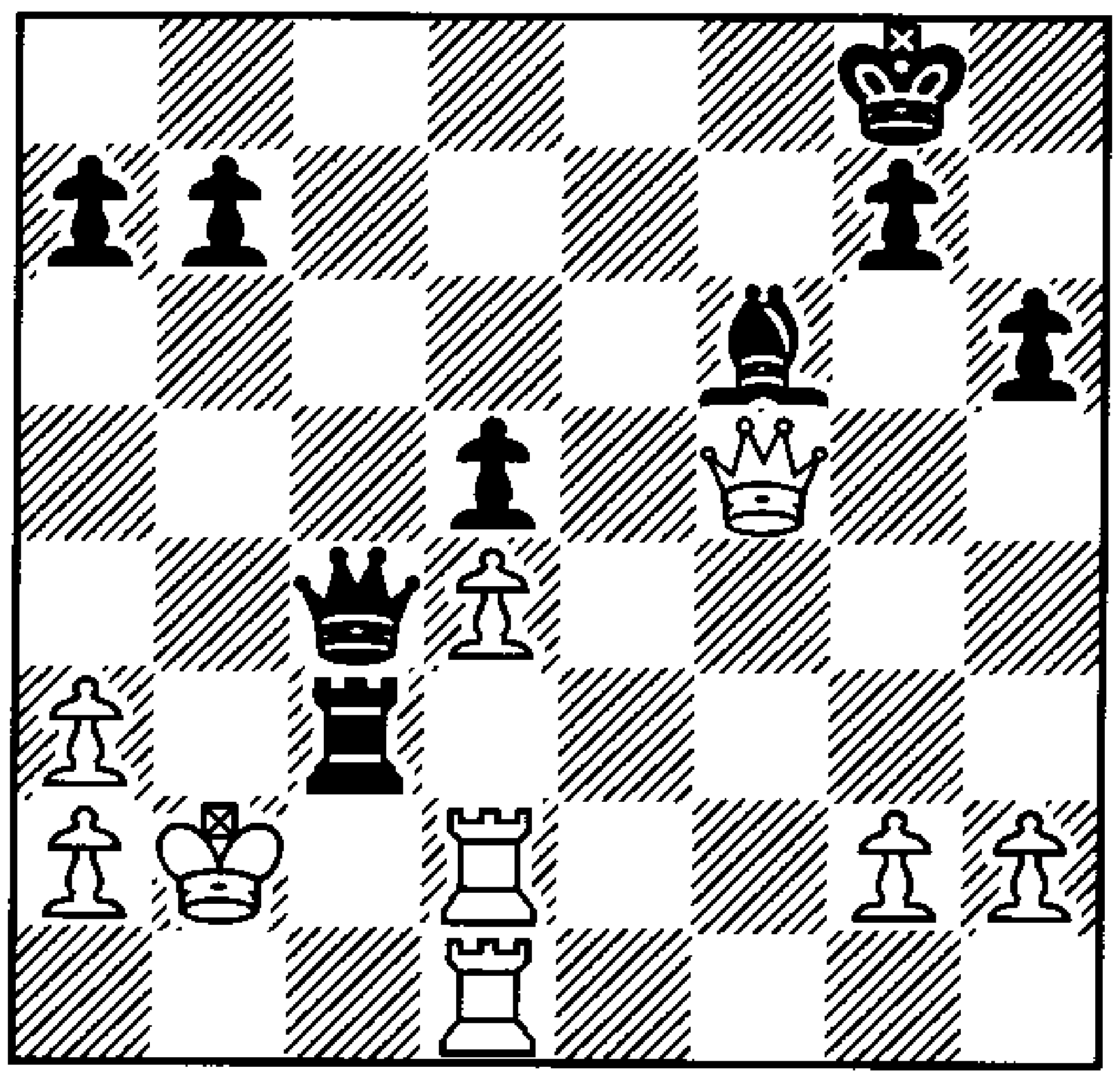
Possible was 25 ♖e1!? ♕c4 (25...♔f8? 26 ♖f2! and ♖xf6+, while after 25...♖c8?! White has a clear advantage) 26 ♖e8+ ♔h7 27 ♕f5+ g6 28 ♖e7+!, forcing a draw: 28...♗g7 29 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 30 ♕d7+ ♔g8 (but not 30...♔f6? 31 ♖f2+ ♔g5 32 ♕e7+ etc.) or 28...♗xe7 29 ♕f7+ ♔h8 30 ♕e8+.

25...♕c4

25...♖xa3?! 26 ♕c8+ ♔f7 27 ♖b2 was unclear.

26 ♔b2?

Lasker's time-trouble haste had upset Pillsbury's equanimity: he sensed that his opponent had lost the thread of the game and... he grew nervous. And yet 26 ♔b1! (26 ♕f1?! ♕a4; 26 ♕b1 ♖xa3 27 ♕b2 ♖c3 28 ♔b1 b5 is level) 26...♖xa3 27 ♖c1! (previously they considered only the insipid 27 ♕c2 ♖c3 28 ♕b2 b5! 29 ♖c2! ♗xd4 30 ♖xc3 ♗xc3) would have set Black unpleasant problems: 27...♕b5+ (27...♖c3? 28 ♖xc3 ♕xc3 29 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 30 ♖d1) 28 ♔a1 ♕a5 29 ♖c8+ ♔f7 30 ♖b2, when it is now White who has an attack. A couple of accurate moves – and chess history could have taken a different course...

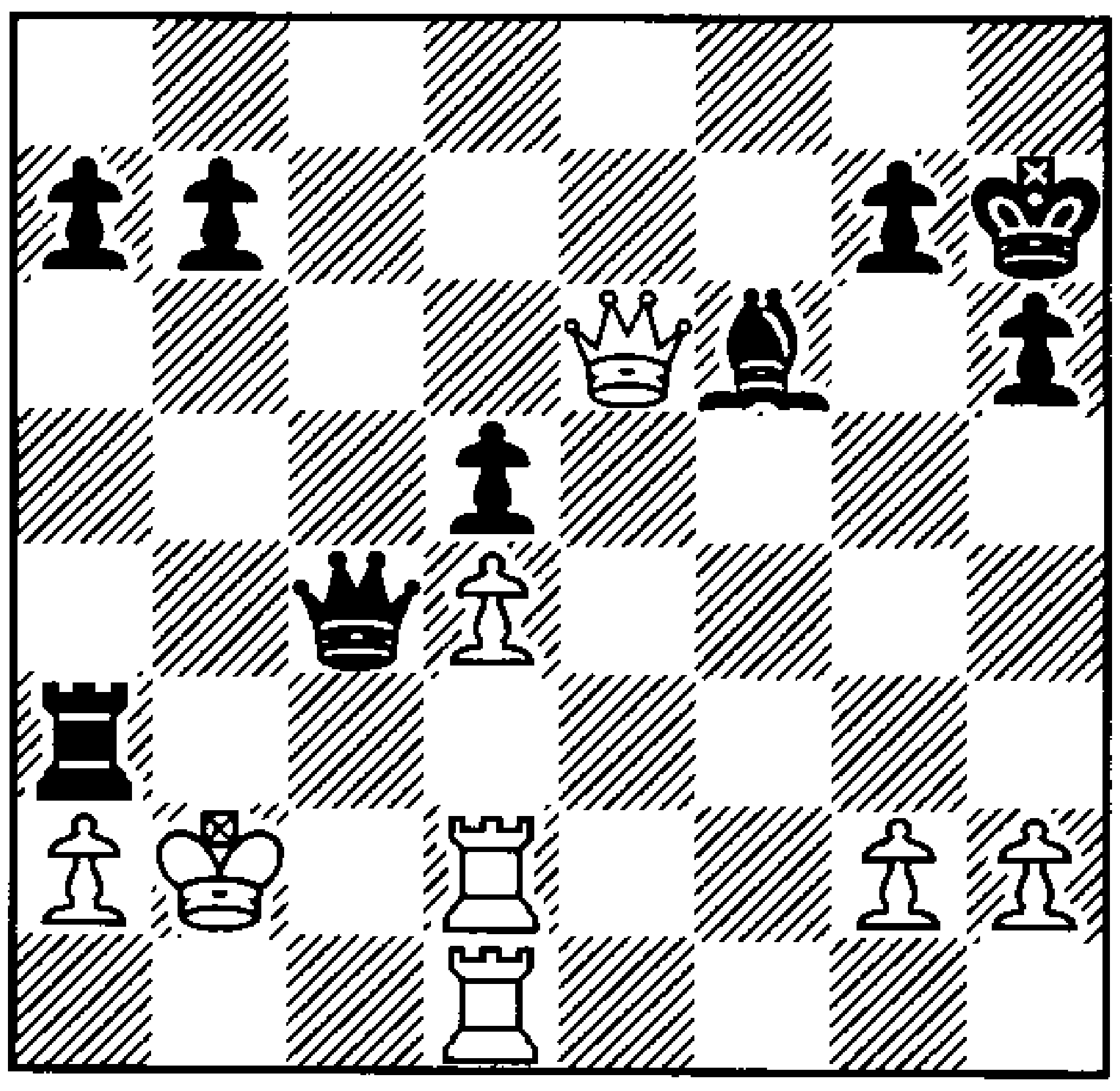


26...♖xa3!!

This is some kind of mysticism: the second rook is also sacrificed on the very same square! I think that Pillsbury must have been unable to believe his eyes...

27 ♕e6+ ♔h7?

27...♔h8 would have won cleanly – 28 ♕e8+ (28 ♔b1 ♗xd4) 28...♔h7 29 ♔b1 (29 ♔xa3? ♕c3+ 30 ♔a4 a6) 29...♗xd4 30 ♕e2 ♕b4+ 31 ♖b2 ♗xb2 32 ♕xb2 ♕e4+ 33 ♔a1 ♖a4 etc.



28 ♔xa3??

Worn out by Black's ferocious onslaught, Pillsbury walks into a mate. Also bad was 28 ♔b1? ♗xd4! 29 ♕f5+ g6! 30 ♕d7+ ♗g7. But for some reason no one has pointed out the saving 28 ♕f5+! ♔h8 29 ♔b1!, for example: 29...♖xa2! (29...♗xd4 30 ♕f8+ and ♕xa3) 30 ♖xa2 ♕b3+ 31 ♔c1 ♗g5+ (31...♕xa2 32 ♕c8+ ♔h7 33 ♕c2+) 32 ♖ad2 ♕c3+ 33 ♕c2 ♕a1+ 34 ♕b1 ♕c3+ with perpetual check.

28...♕c3+ 29 ♔a4 b5+! (the final point) **30 ♔xb5 ♕c4+ 31 ♔a5 ♗d8+**

In view of 32 ♕b6 ♗xb6 mate White resigned. Later Lasker called this game the best of his career.

A tremendous human drama, which was also of historic importance! That day Caissa chose Lasker – and, as we now know, the chess goddess was not mistaken. Her cruel whim influenced the fate of both of these great players.

Pillsbury was so broken-hearted that he suffered a further five defeats(!) and in the end did not even take second place. According to some sources, it was then that he began to show the first signs of the illness that ten years later was to send him to his grave. It was written that a sudden diagnosis, supplied the very day before this fatal game, shocked the young master. At any event, he himself complained of serious headaches, sleeplessness and neurosis, due to which several of his games were moved to different days...

But the inspired champion convincingly won both the match-tournament (1. Lasker 11½ out of 18; 2. Steinitz – 9½; 3. Pillsbury 8; 4. Chigorin – 7), and the super-tournament Nuremberg 1896 (1. Lasker – 13½ out of 18; 2. Maróczy 12½; 3-4. Pillsbury and Tarrasch – 12; 5. Janowski – 11½; 6. Steinitz – 11), and then also the return match with Steinitz (Moscow 1896/97) with a score of +10 -2 =5 – and he held the crown for a further quarter of a century!

Who knows for how long Pillsbury suffered that tragic day in St Petersburg, remembering his missed chances. Later, as one of the historians aptly put it, he spent his remaining life unsuccessfully trying to catch up with the Pillsbury of 1895 – and he was unable to do so: he was trying to catch himself, while Lasker was moving forward...

Six months later in Nuremberg he again finished behind Lasker, although he gained brilliant revenge in their individual game, receiving a special prize from Rothschild for his fine win over the champion. And eight years later in Cambridge Springs, although already in far from his best form, he found in himself the strength for a final upsurge of chess thought.

Game 42

H.Pillsbury-Em.Lasker

Cambridge Springs 1904

Queen's Gambit D50

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 c5 5 ♗g5 cxd4 6 ♕xd4 ♘c6 (6...♗e7!?) **7 ♗xf6!**

A new move, which had awaited its hour for many years.

7...gxf6

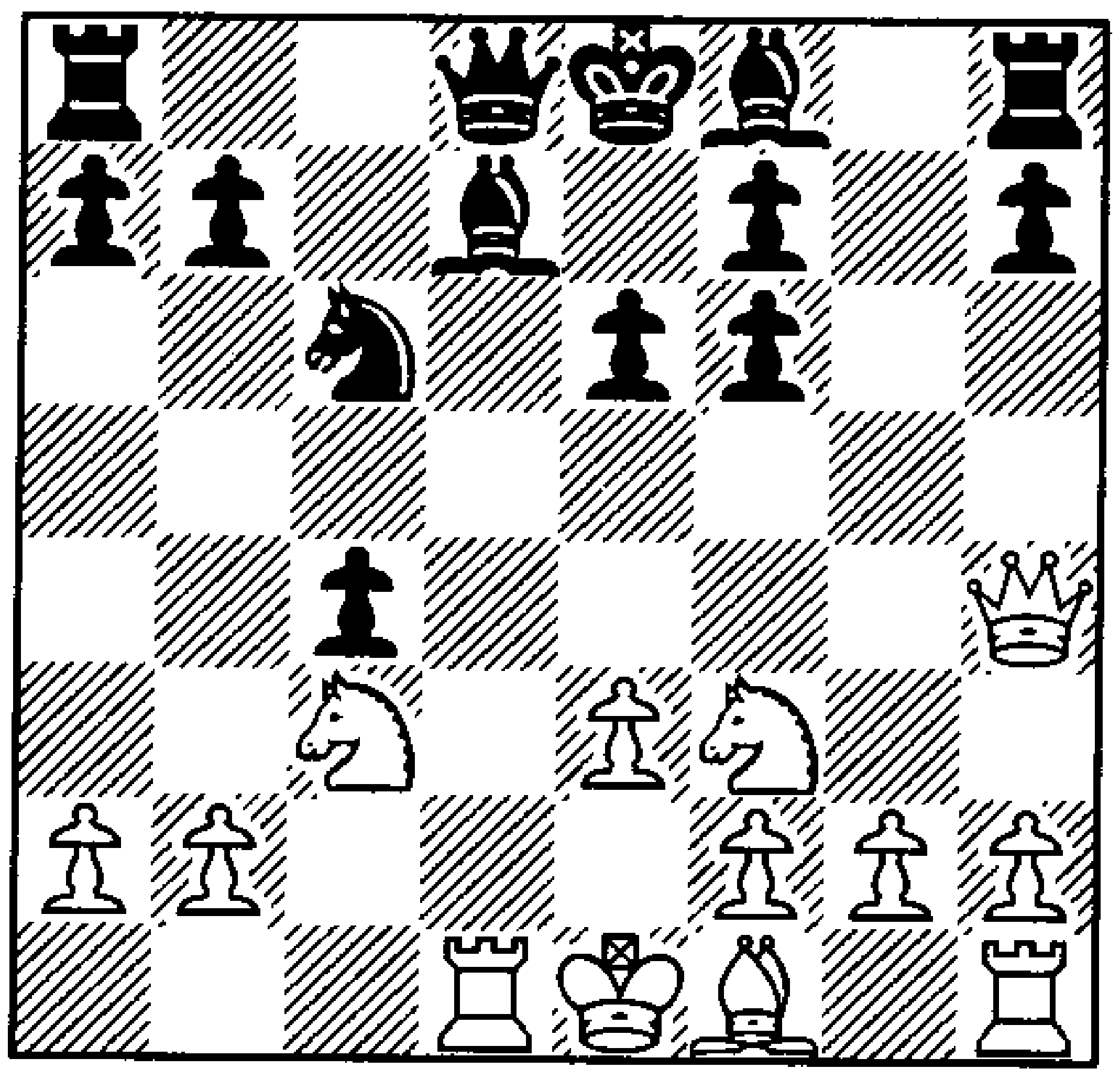
It transpires that White is better after 7...♘xd4 8 ♗xd8 ♘c2+ (8...♘xf3+ 9 gxf3 ♔xd8 10 cxd5 exd5 11 0-0-0 or immediately 11 ♘xd5 with an extra pawn) 9 ♔d2 ♘xa1 10 ♗c7 (10 ♗h4 ♗d6 11 e3) 10...dxc4 11 e4 ♘b3+ 12 axb3 cxb3 13 ♗c4 etc.

8 ♕h4 dxc4 (8...d4?! 9 0-0-0! e5 10 e3) **9 ♖d1!?**

If 9 ♕xc4, then 9...♕b6 is good, while if 9 e3 – 9...f5 10 ♕xd8+ ♘xd8 11 ♗xc4 ♘c6 12 ♗b5 ♗d7 13 ♔e2 a6 14 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 15 ♖hd1 ♗g7 16 ♖ac1 ♔e7 17 g3 ♖hd8 is equal (Bogoljubow-Alekhine, Munich 1942).

9...♗d7 10 e3

The critical position of the variation.



10...♘e5?!

Lasker falters! Later he recommended 10...f5, for example: 11 ♕g3 h5 (11...♕b6!?) 12 ♗xc4 h4 13 ♕f4 ♖g8 14 ♘e5 ♘xe5 15 ♕xe5 ♗g7!? (15...a6 16 0-0 ♖c8 is level) 16 ♕d6 ♗xc3+ 17 bxc3 ♖xg2 18 ♕b4 ♕b6 with a comfortable game, or 11 ♕xc4 ♗g7 12 ♕b3 ♗xc3+ 13 ♕xc3 ♕a5 14 ♕xa5 ♘xa5 15 ♘e5 ♗a4 16 ♖d4 ♘c6 17 ♖xa4 ♘xe5 18 ♗b5+ ♔e7 with equal chances (Duz-Khotimirsky-Znosko-Borovsky, St Petersburg 1905).

Euwe suggested 10...♗e7. After 11 ♗xc4 ♕a5 12 0-0 f5 13 ♕f4 0-0-0 and ...♖hg8-g6 Black has clear counterplay (Fuster-Cuellar, Havana 1966).

11 ♘xe5

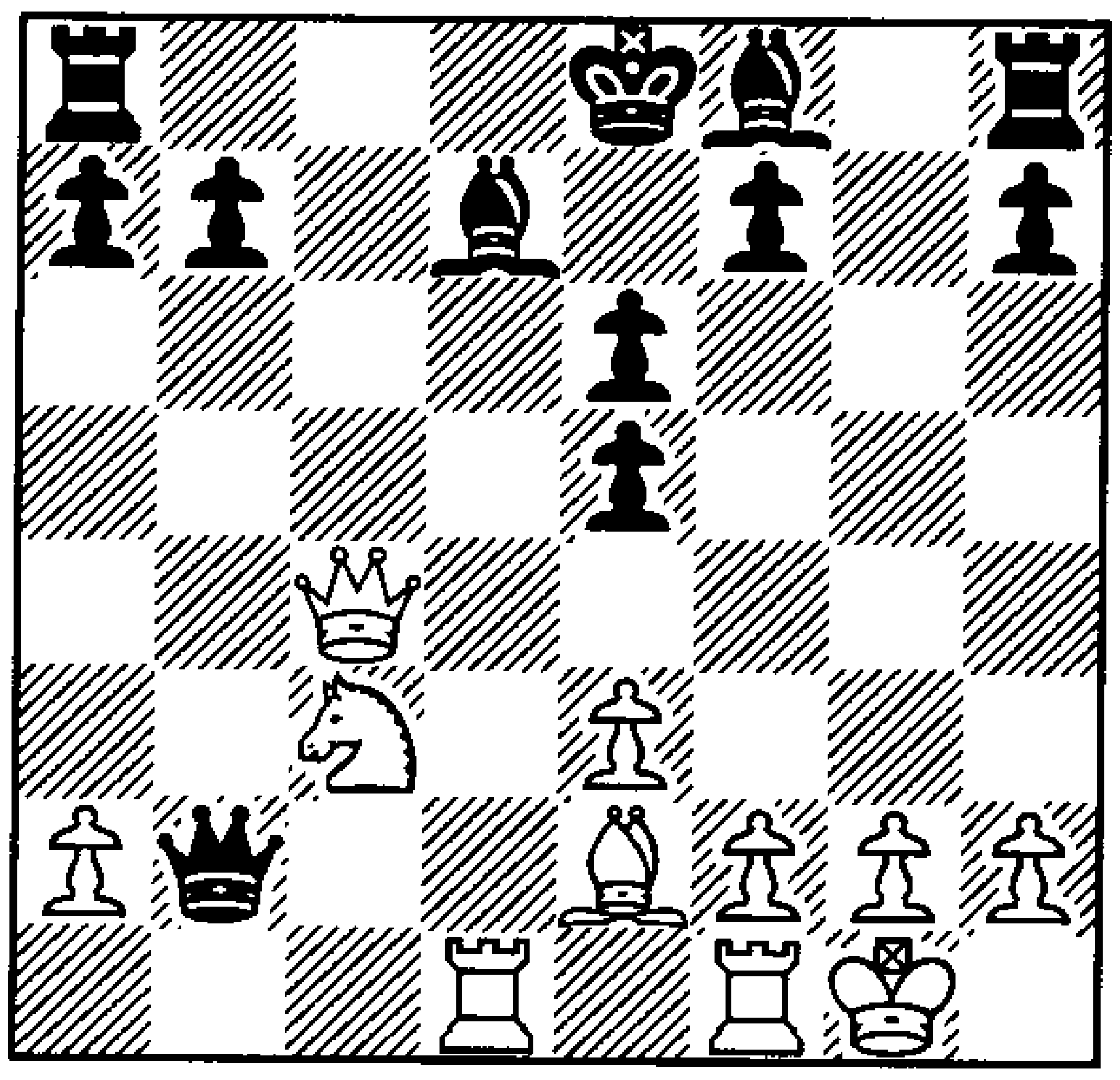
After 11 ♗e2?! ♖c8 12 ♘xe5 fxe5 13 ♕g3 ♕a5 there is no real compensation for the pawn (Guimard-Grau, Argentina 1938).

11...fxe5 12 ♕xc4 ♕b6 13 ♗e2!

A bold and fully justified pawn sacrifice. White quickly completes his development and throws all his forces against the enemy king. Much more passive was 13 ♖d2 ♗c6.

13...♕xb2 14 0-0!

14 ♗h5 ♖c8! 15 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 16 ♖xd7+ ♗e7 17 ♘d1 ♖xc4 18 ♘xb2 ♖c1+ 19 ♘d1 ♖d8 was unclear.



14...♖c8 15 ♕d3 ♖c7 (if 15...♗c6, then 16 ♗f3) **16 ♘e4 ♗e7**

Another defensive try was 16...♕c2!? 17 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 18 ♕xd6 ♕c5.

17 ♘d6+

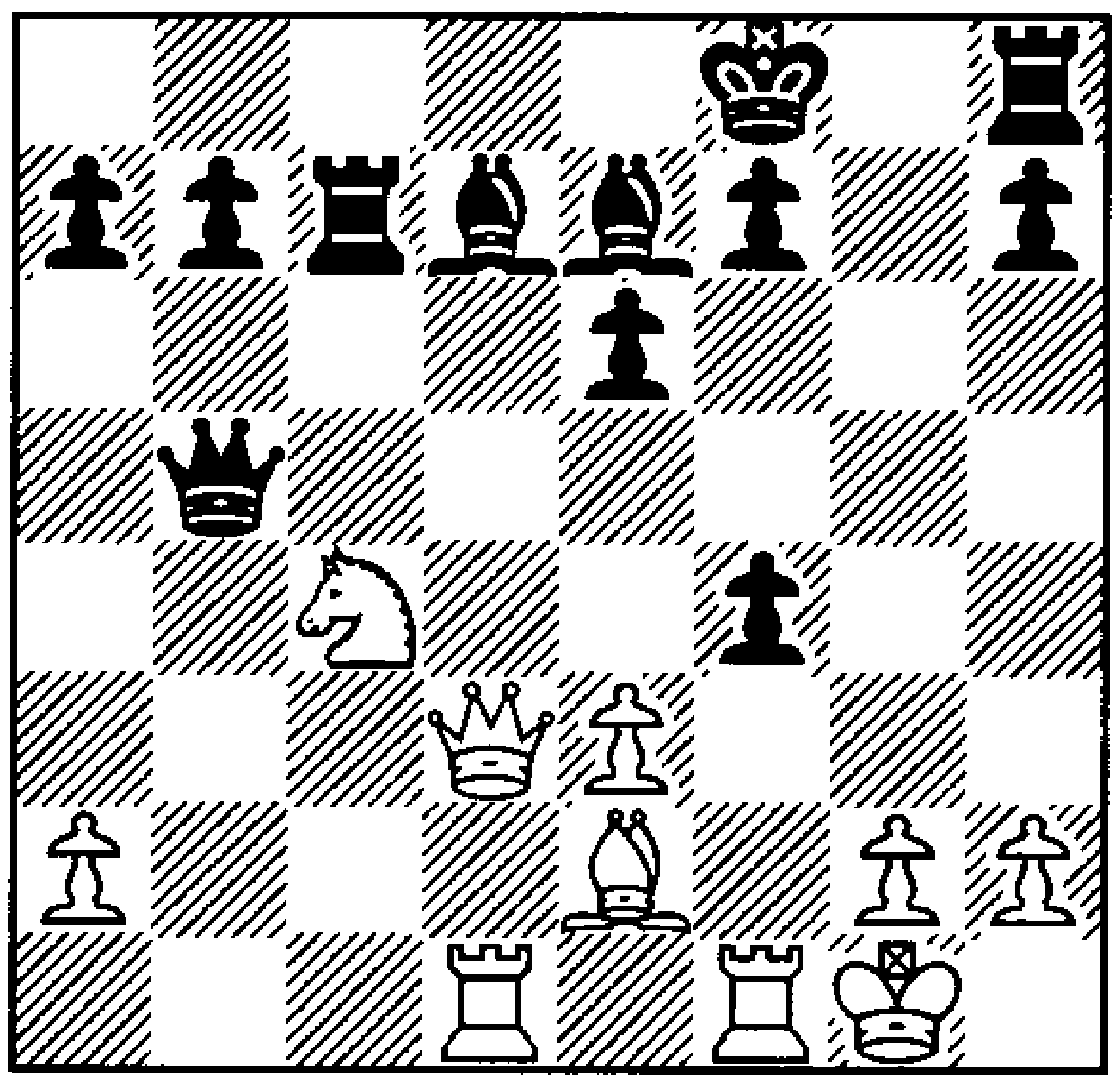
Inadequate was 17 ♖d2 ♕b6 18 ♖b1 ♕c6 19 ♗f3 ♕a6! 20 ♕xa6 bxa6 with a tenable endgame.

17...♔f8

'After 17...♗xd6 18 ♕xd6 ♕b6 (18...♕c3? 19 ♗b5!) 19 ♕xe5 Black's position is catastrophic: 19...♖g8 (19...0-0 20 ♖b1 or 20 ♕g5+!? ♔h8 21 ♕f6+ ♔g8 22 ♖d4 e5 23 ♕xe5) 20 ♖d6 ♕c5 21 ♕xc5 ♖xc5 22 ♖fd1 ♖c7? 23 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 24 ♗b5.' (B. Vainstein) However, 22...♗a4! is stronger, and therefore White should play 20 ♗h5! ♕c6 21 e4 with an attack (bad is 21...♕c5? 22 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 23 ♖xd7+).

18 ♘c4 ♕b5 19 f4! exf4?

Far more solid was 19...♗c6 20 fxe5 (20 ♘xe5?! ♕xd3 21 ♗xd3 ♗c5!) 20...♕d5 21 ♕xd5 ♗xd5 22 ♘d6 ♗xd6 23 exd6 ♖c2 24 ♗f3, when White has only a minimal advantage.



20 ♕d4! f6 (if 20...♖g8 or 20...♔g8, then also 21 ♕xf4) **21 ♕xf4 ♕c5**

But not 21...♖c8 22 ♕d4 ♗c6 23 ♖xf6+!

22 ♘e5 ♗e8 23 ♘g4

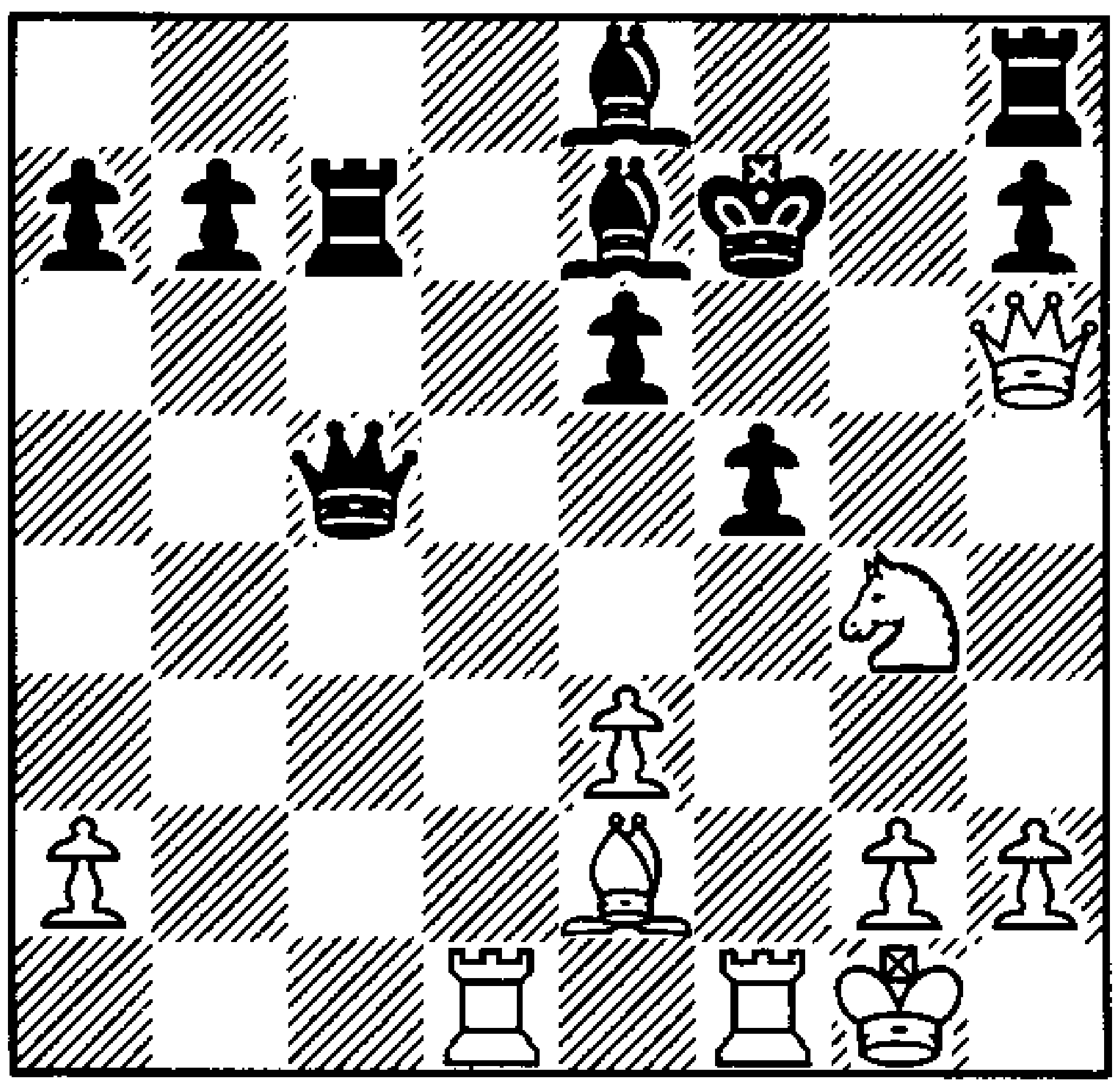
23 ♖d4 was also interesting, for example: 23...♖g8 24 ♖c4 ♕d5 25 ♗f3 ♕xe5 26 ♕xe5 ♖xc4 27 ♕xe6 or 23...♔g7 24 ♘g4 e5 25 ♕h6+ ♔g8 26 ♗c4+ and wins.

23...f5

In view of what follows, more tenacious was 23...♗g6! 24 ♘xf6 (24 ♖d4 ♖c6 25 ♘xf6 ♔g7 26 ♘d7 ♕g5) 24...♔g7 25 ♘d7 ♕c3 26 ♗g4 with an attacking position for White.

24 ♕h6+ ♔f7

The culmination of this gripping duel.



25 ♗c4!!

The right way! 25 ♖xf5+ ♕xf5 (25...exf5? 26 ♗c4+! ♕xc4 27 ♘e5+ and ♘xc4) 26 ♖f1 ♖c5! was unclear.

25...♖c6 (25...♕xc4? 26 ♘e5+) **26 ♖xf5+! ♕xf5 27 ♖f1 ♕xf1+** (or 27...♖xc4 28 ♖xf5+ exf5 29 ♘e5+) **28 ♔xf1 ♗d7 29 ♕h5+ ♔f8 30 ♘e5 1-0**

A fine portrait of the 'American meteor' was painted many years later by Alekhine: 'Pillsbury was, after Morphy, undoubtedly the greatest chess talent of the USA. However, their careers were completely different: whereas Morphy slowly, quietly and joylessly extinguished the candle of his life, Pillsbury aspired for the candle of his life to burn constantly at both ends. "Wine, women and not harmless songs, but strong cigars" – this was Pillsbury's principle of life. And this together with simultaneous blindfold displays, playing whist, and again blindfold games of draughts...'

Indeed something has to be said about Pillsbury's sensational displays without looking at the board. He toured the whole world giving them, playing in excess of a thousand 'blindfold' games in more than seventy displays! He held the world record at that time, established in 1902 in Moscow – 22 boards (+17 -1 =4). This display impressed the nine-year-old Alekhine, who later recalled: 'Pillsbury's achievement had a stunning effect on me, as it did on the entire chess world.' And somewhat earlier a similar display in Havana was observed by the 11-year-old Capablanca – and he also remembered it all his life: 'Pillsbury staggered everyone with the strength and subtlety of his brilliant play.'

On the other hand, Lasker thought that playing blindfold damaged Pillsbury's already undermined health, that 'the struggle of life was made very hard for him,' and he reproached the chess world for the fact that, 'it made the meagre prizes it gave him dependent on too much effort and exertion...'

In the summer of 1906 a fatal illness 'announced mate' to the legendary American. Pillsbury died without reaching the age of 34 and remained as one of the brightest stars ever to sparkle in the chess firmament. The overall score of his dramatic meetings with Lasker was +5 -5 =4, and one can only bitterly regret that they did not in fact play a match for the world crown – a match about which there was much discussion during the transition between the 19th and 20th centuries...

'A genius has gone,' the world champion mourned in his *Lasker's Chess Magazine*... 'Those who knew Pillsbury in his days of early youth will never forget the striking, almost beautiful face which he bore in those days. The eyes had that expression which speaks of mentality, dreaming, poetic sentiment, and righteousness. Some called them angelic. They gave one an idea how the eyes of the old prophets must have looked. His countenance had the stamp of natural nobility. From the long line of his Puritan ancestors he had inherited moral inflexibility, muscles of steel bred by work and a sane life, and a capacity for inspiration that in the olden days might have been religious, but in the modern man spent itself on his one great love, Caissa.'

The Lasker Defence

Thus, after the triumphal year 1896 Lasker became not only the nominal, but also the generally acknowledged chess king. He was distinguished by his phenomenal tenacity, tactical resourcefulness, fine endgame technique and subtle psychological feeling. Some time earlier Schiffers had commented that Lasker 'has no weak aspects at all and is himself capable of determining and exploiting the opponent's weak aspect.'

Lasker had an indifferent attitude to the study of opening theory, considering that the main thing was to achieve playable positions. Even so, he devised at least two defences that bear his name: in the Queen's Gambit (cf. his match with Marshall, 1907) and in the Evans Gambit – here his defensive plan put the 'opening of the 19th century' out of action for almost 100 years!

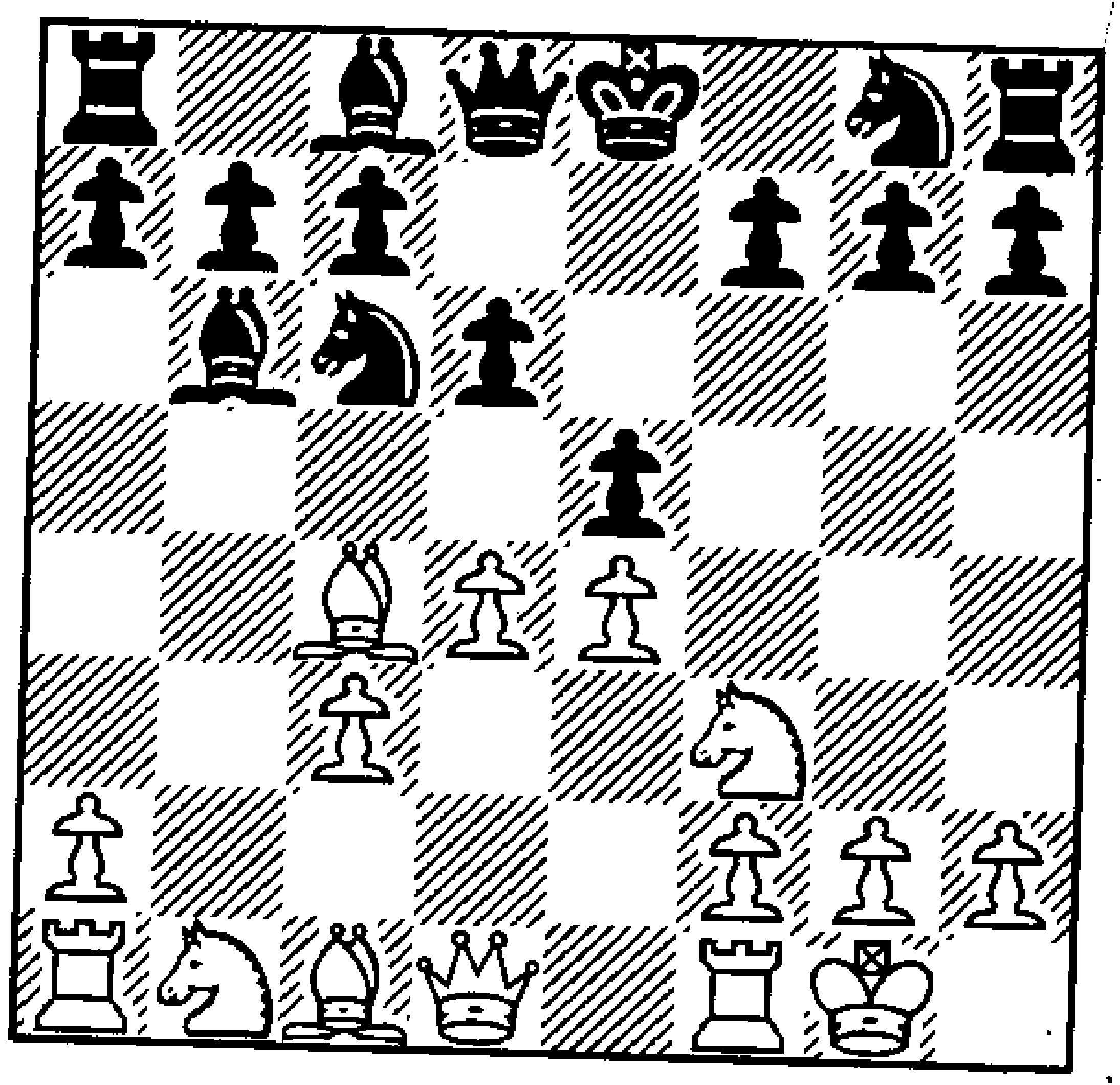
Game 43
M.Chigorin-Em.Lasker
St Petersburg 1895/96, 3rd round
Evans Gambit C52

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 b4 ♗xb4 5 c3 ♗c5

For putting the following idea into practice, 5...♗a5! is more accurate.

6 0-0 (6 d4!) **6...d6! 7 d4 ♗b6!**

The value of this move, which was tried back in one of the match games McDonnell-La Bourdonnais (London 1834/35), went unnoticed until Lasker played it.



8 a4

Alas, Mikhail Ivanovich avoids the current 8 dxe5 (in the 20th century 8 ♗a3 and 8 h3 were also played) 8...dxe5! (8...♗g4, 8...♗e6 and 8...♘ge7, which have also occurred, are less natural) with two possible continuations:

1) 9 ♕xd8+ (9 ♘bd2 ♕f6 10 ♗d5 ♘ge7 is unfavourable for White and 9 ♗xf7+? ♔xf7 10 ♘xe5+ ♔e8! 11 ♕h5+ g6 12 ♘xg6 ♘f6 etc. is altogether incorrect) 9...♘xd8 10 ♘xe5 ♗e6, and in view of the weakness of White's queenside pawns, Black has a favourable endgame (Chigorin-Pillsbury, London 1899);

2) 9 ♕b3 ♕f6 (9...♕e7!? 10 ♗a3 ♕f6) 10 ♗g5 (10 ♖d1 h6!?; 10 ♗b5 h6 or 10...♗e6 11

♕a4 ♗d7) 10...♕g6 11 ♗d5 (11 ♗b5 f6 12 ♗h4 ♘e7 etc.) 11...♘ge7 (11...f6!? 12 ♗xg8 ♘a5 13 ♘xe5 fxe5 14 ♕d5 ♘c6 is unclear) 12 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 13 ♗xc6 (13 a4?! ♘a5 14 ♕a3+ ♕d6 15 ♘xe5? ♗c5! wins for Black) 13...♕xc6 14 ♘xe5 ♕e6 15 ♘c4 (inferior is 15 ♘d3 ♕xb3 16 axb3 ♖d8 17 ♘f4 c6 or 15 ♕a3+ ♕d6! 16 ♕xd6+ cxd6). Regarding this, the main variation of the defence, the two players conducted a lively dispute on the pages of the magazines that they edited. Chigorin believed in White's attacking resources, whereas Lasker considered that Black's two bishops and the absence of any weaknesses in his position promised him the advantage – for example, after 15...♖d8 16 ♕a3+ ♔e8.

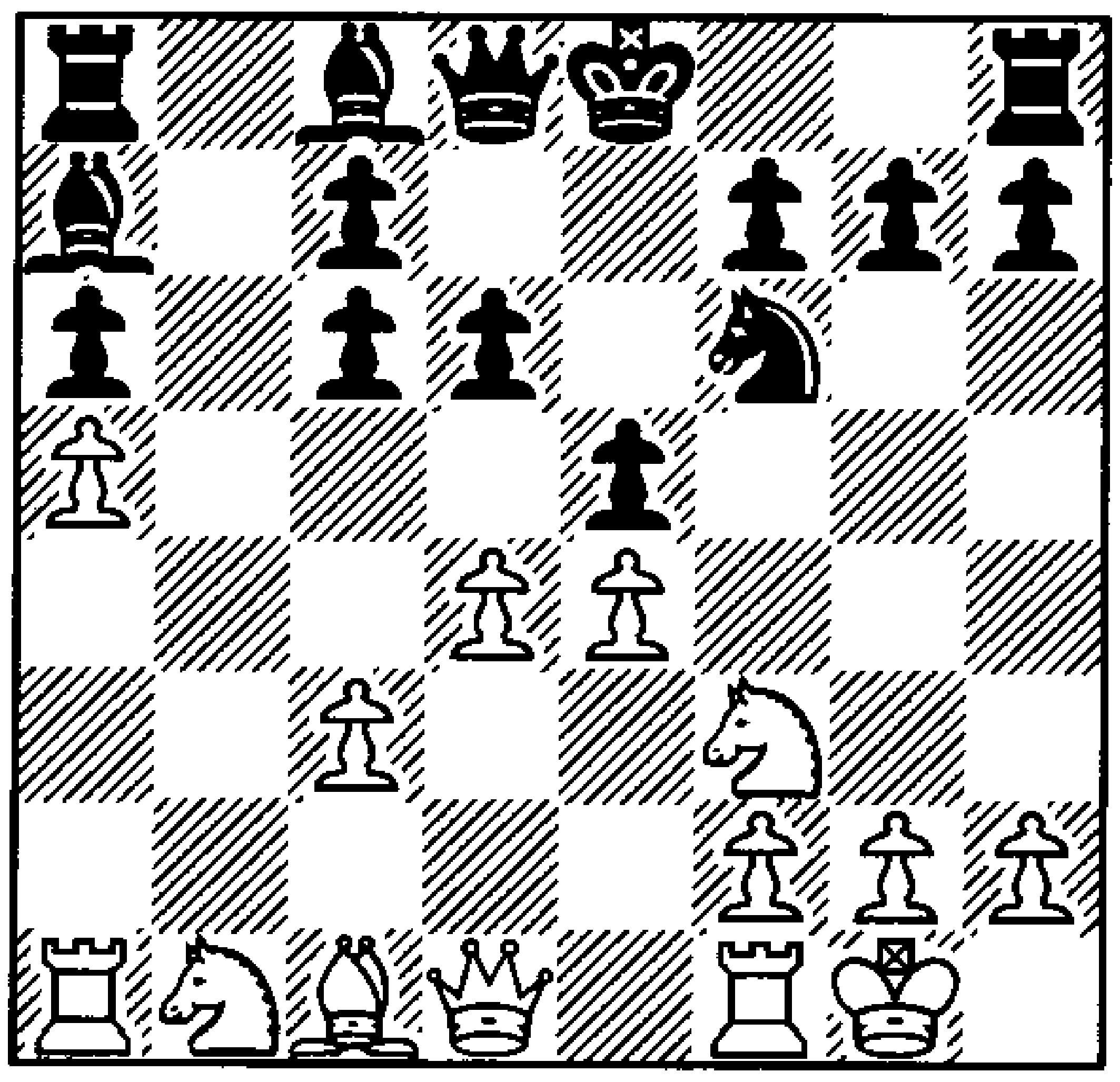
8...♘f6

Also sound is 8...♗g4 (if 8...exd4 – with the idea of 9 cxd4 ♗g4 10 ♗b2 ♕f6 – there can follow the sharp 9 a5!? ♘xa5 10 ♖xa5 ♗xa5 11 ♕b3 ♕d7 12 e5 d5 13 ♗xd5 c6 14 ♗c4 b5 15 e6 fxe6 16 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 17 ♖e1 ♕xe1+ 18 ♘xe1 Blackburne-Gunsberg, London 1900) 9 ♗b5 ♗xf3 10 ♕xf3 a6 11 ♗xc6+ bxc6 with a good game (Swiderski-Gunsberg, Monte Carlo 1904).

9 ♗b5

No better is 9 ♗d5 ♘xd5 10 exd5 ♘a5 11 dxe5 0-0!? 12 ♗g5 ♕d7 13 ♖e1 dxe5 14 ♘xe5 ♕f5 15 ♗h4 f6 16 ♘f3 ♗d7 17 ♘a3 ♖ae8 (Chigorin-Lipke, Vienna 1898).

9...a6 10 ♗xc6+ bxc6 11 a5 ♗a7



12 dxe5

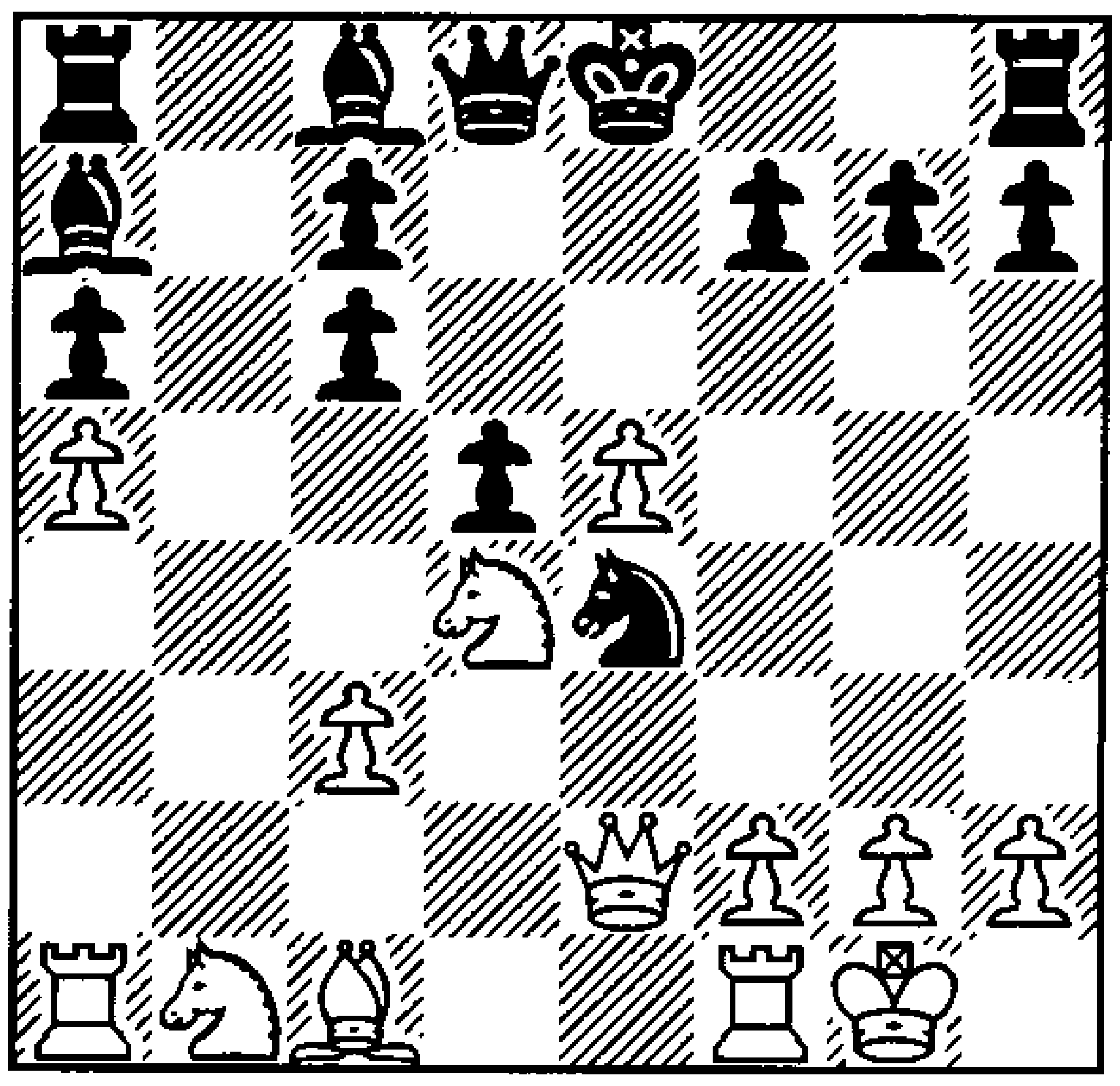
Subsequent attempts to improve White's play were unsuccessful: 12 ♘bd2 exd4 13 cxd4 0-0 14 ♕c2 ♗d7 15 ♗b2 ♖e8 with a quite healthy extra pawn (Schiffers-Marco, Vienna 1898) or 12 ♕a4 exd4! 13 e5?! (not resigning himself to 13 ♕xc6+ ♗d7 14 ♕xa6 ♘xe4) 13...dxe5 14 ♗a3 e4 15 cxd4 ♗d7 16 ♕c4 c5 17 ♘e5 0-0 18 ♕xa6 ♖e8 19 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 20 dxc5 ♗xc5 etc. (Duz-Khotimirsky-Salwe, St Petersburg 1905).

12...♘xe4 13 ♕e2?

'White's planned combination is incorrect and it leads to a lost position. He should have fought for a draw with 13 exd6 0-0! (13...cxd6 14 ♕e2 d5 15 ♘d4 ♗xd4 16 cxd4 0-0 17 ♘d2 is not dangerous for White; *excuse me: after 17...♘d6! he does not have equality – G.K.*) 14 dxc7 ♕xc7 15 ♕e2 or 13 ♕a4 ♘c5 14 ♕xc6+ ♗d7 15 ♕d5 0-0 16 exd6 ♗b5 17 ♖d1 (17 c4?! c6) 17...♕xd6 18 ♕xd6 cxd6 19 ♗e3!' (Zak) However, after 19...♖fc8 20 ♘h4 ♘e4 21 ♗xa7 ♖xa7 22 f3 ♘xc3 23 ♘xc3 ♖xc3 24 ♖xd6 g6 25 f4 ♖e7 Black would have retained somewhat the better prospects.

13...d5 14 ♘d4?

Better, even so, was 14 ♗e3 0-0 (14...♗g4 15 ♗xa7 ♖xa7 16 ♕e3 ♖b7 17 ♘bd2) 15 ♗xa7 ♖xa7 16 ♘d4 ♗d7 17 f3 ♘c5 18 ♘d2 ♖e8 19 f4 ♖b7, although even here things are not easy for White.



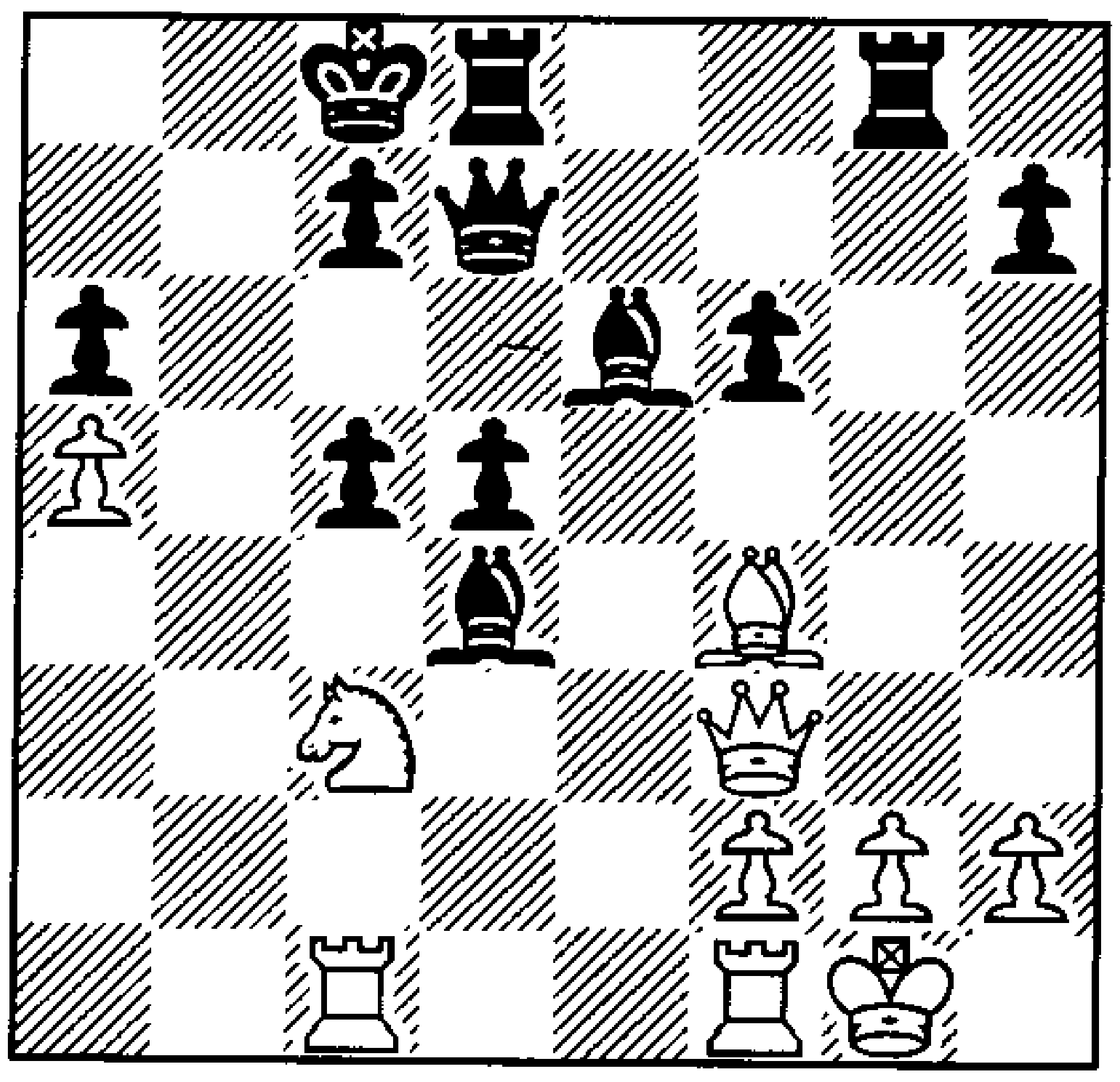
14...♘xc3! 15 ♘xc3 ♗xd4 16 ♕d3 (16 ♗b2 ♖b8 17 ♘a4 ♗xb2 18 ♘xb2 c5 is hopeless) **16...c5 17 ♕g3 ♗e6! 18 ♗g5**

If 18 ♕xg7, then 18...♔d7! 19 ♖a3 ♖g8 20 ♕xh7 ♗xe5 wins.

18...♕d7 19 ♖ac1 f6!

The opening of the g-file is decisive.

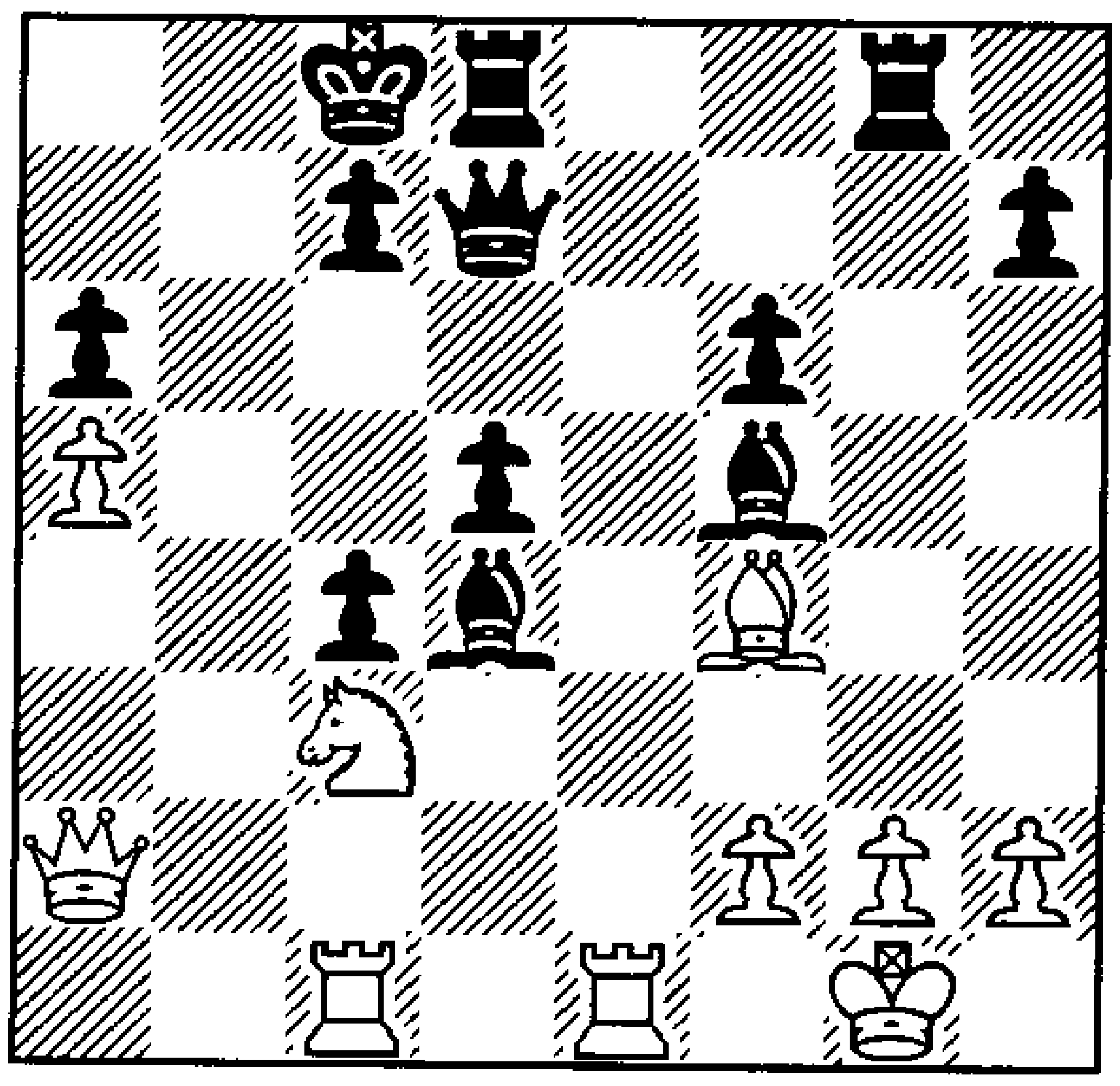
20 exf6 gxf6 21 ♗f4 ♖g8 22 ♕f3 0-0-0



23 ♖fe1

If 23 ♘e2 possible is either 23...♗g4 24 ♕d3 c4 25 ♕xd4 ♗xe2 26 ♖fe1 (26 ♕a7 ♕c6 wins) 26...♖xg2+! (but not Zak's 26...♕g4 27 g3 ♗f3? in view of 28 ♕a7! ♖g7 29 ♖b1) 27 ♔xg2 (27 ♔h1 ♕h3 28 ♖c3 ♗f3 etc.) 27...♕g4+ 28 ♗g3 ♗f3+ 29 ♔g1 ♕h3, or 23...♗h3! 24 ♗g3 (24 ♘g3 ♕g4 25 ♕xg4+ ♗xg4 26 ♗e3 ♗e5 27 ♗xc5 ♔d7 28 f4 ♗d6 29 ♖f2 ♖c8 30 ♗xd6 ♔xd6 31 ♖d2 ♖ge8 32 h3 ♗d7 also wins) 24...♗g4 25 ♕d3 ♗xe2 26 ♕xe2 c4 27 ♖fd1 ♖ge8 28 ♕f3 ♕e6 29 ♔f1 ♗a7 with a won game in each instance.

23...c4 24 ♕e2 (or 24 ♗g3 ♗g4 25 ♕f4 ♗e5 and Black wins) **24...♗f5 25 ♕a2?**



This loses instantly, but 25 ♗g3 ♗xc3 26 ♖xc3 ♖de8 27 ♕d2 ♖xe1+ 28 ♕xe1 ♗d3 29 ♖c1 d4 30 ♕d2 ♖e8 would not have helped, and nor even the best move 25 ♕d1! ♗d3 26 ♗g3 ♗xc3.

25...♖xg2+! 26 ♔h1

Or 26 ♔xg2 ♗h3+ 27 ♔g1 ♕g4+ 28 ♗g3 ♕f3 and mates.

26...♖xf2 0-1

The variation with 7...♗b6! became known in opening theory as the 'Lasker Defence'.

After confirming his champion's authority, Lasker gave up chess for two and a half years and engaged in a serious study of mathematics and philosophy.

The major chess event of those years was the international tournament in Vienna 1898: 1-2. Tarrasch and Pillsbury – 27½ out of 36; 3. Janowski – 25½; 4. Steinitz – 23½; 5. Schlechter – 21½; 6-7. Burn and Chigorin – 20, etc. By winning the additional match for first prize with a score of 2½-1½, Tarrasch regained the reputation of No.1 challenger. However, instead of trying to obtain a match for the crown, he left the chess stage for four years...

Lasker's return was no less triumphal. He won by an enormous margin the tournaments in London 1899 (1. Lasker – 23½ out of 27; 2-4. Maróczy, Pillsbury and Janowski – 19; 5. Schlechter – 18; 6. Blackburne – 16½; 7. Chigorin – 16) and Paris 1900, where the first draws were replayed (1. Lasker – 14½ out of 16; 2. Pillsbury – 12½; 3-4. Maróczy and Marshall – 12; 5. Burn – 11; 6. Chigorin – 10½).

Immediately after the London tournament, Lasker was challenged to a match for the title of world champion for the first time. The challenger was the Franco-Russian master David Janowski (1868-1927), a player of vivid attacking style, who had defeated all the stars, including Lasker himself, many times. Six months before London, on a tour of America, he challenged Pillsbury to a candidates match, but nothing came of this. 'A great pity,' the press wrote. 'A match between the two brilliant young players would have brought the chess world numerous masterpieces.'

Speaking of masterpieces, one involuntarily recalls the opening of the following game, which was well ahead of its time.

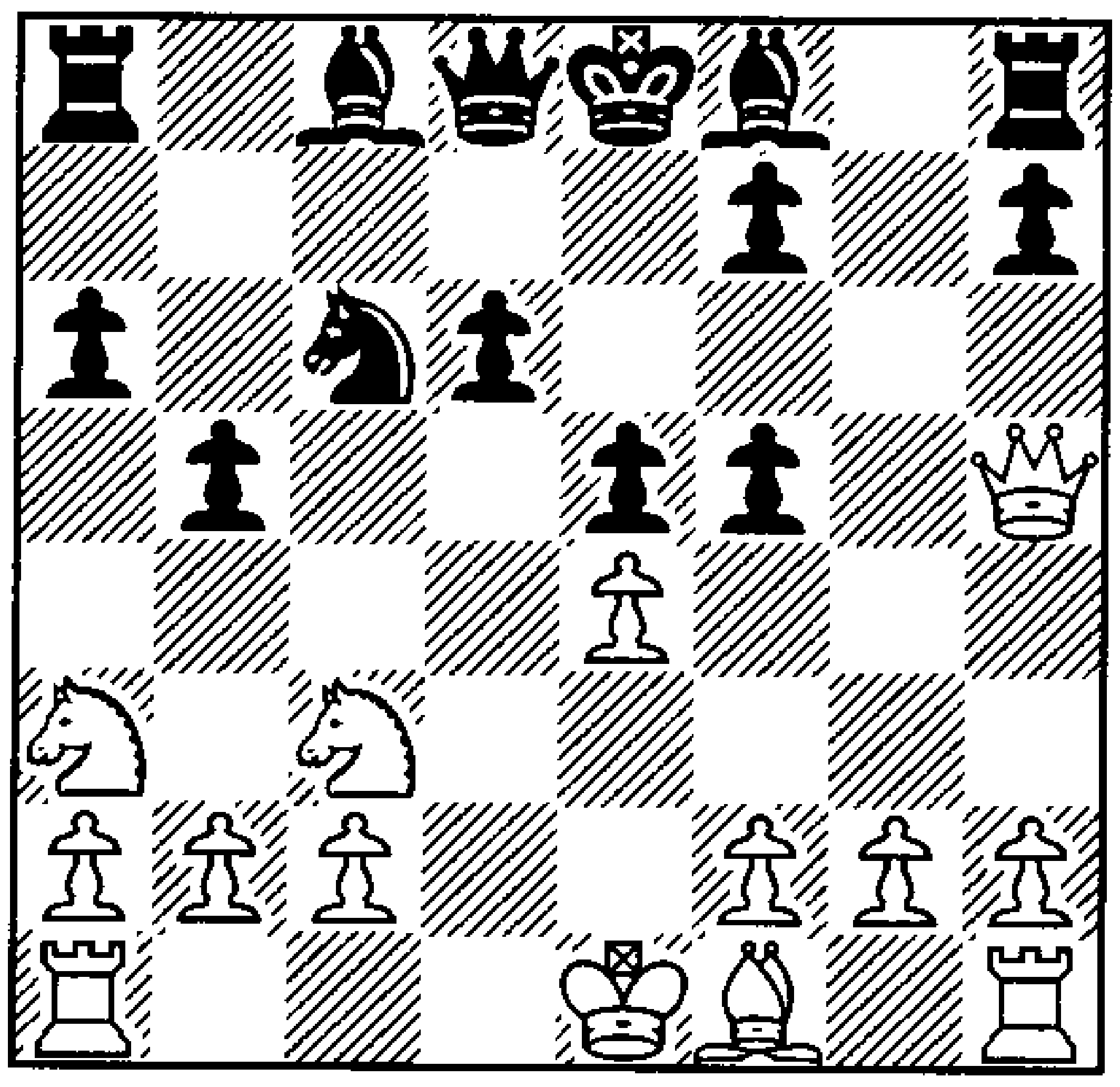
Game 44
S.Tarrasch-D.Janowski
Vienna 1898
Sicilian Defence B33

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 ♘f6 6 ♘db5 d6

An audacious challenge by the new school: Tarrasch considered this move to be... a decisive mistake!

7 ♗f4 e5 8 ♗g5 a6 9 ♗xf6 (more accurate is 9 ♘a3! b5 – the Sveshnikov or Chelyabinsk Variation!) **9...gxf6 10 ♘a3 f5! 11 ♕h5** (11 ♗c4 ♖a7!) **11...b5!**

Just like the second half of the 20th century...



12 ♘axb5!? (getting rid of the 'bad' knight) **12...axb5 13 ♗xb5 ♗b7! 14 ♗c4**

Dubious is 14 exf5?! ♕a5! or 14 ♕xf5?! ♗g7 15 0-0-0 0-0 16 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 17 ♖d3 ♗d7! 18 ♕h5 ♗e6 (Sveshnikov).

14...♕f6 15 ♘d5 ♕g6 16 ♘c7+ ♔d8 17 ♕xg6 fxg6 18 ♘xa8 ♗xa8 19 ♗d5 ♔c7

...and after 20...♗h6! (followed by moving the c6-knight) White's rook and two pawns are no stronger than the two minor pieces.

Janowski was then on the rise (slightly later he brilliantly won the tournaments in Monte Carlo 1901 and Hanover 1902), but his dreams of a match with Lasker had to be deferred. The champion devised a new 'defence': first, he proposed playing to the first to win eight games (draws not counting), whereas the obstinate challenger, 'based on the experience of previous matches for the world championship,' insisted on playing to 10 wins; secondly, he demanded a high monetary stake, which Janowski despaired of collecting – it was joked that 'no one wanted to invest money in a hopeless enterprise.' And after lengthy discussions the match did not in fact take place...

The Indefatigable Marshall

Lasker's tournament victories brought him legendary fame. 'Lasker was there, Lasker the first, the only Lasker,' *Wiener Schachzeitung* summed things up. But the champion continued his deep studies, and in 1900 he defended his doctor's dissertation on mathematics... The 'absolute monarch' did not play tournament chess for four whole years!

At that time those shining in tournaments were Janowski, Pillsbury, Schlechter and Maróczy. The last three were joint-winners at the 12th Congress of the Germany Chess Union (Munich 1900), with Maroczy being placed third after a play-off. There, incidentally, a highly momentous event occurred: a Union of International Chess Masters was founded at a meeting chaired by Lasker. The first President to be elected was Berger, and second (at a meeting in Monte Carlo 1902) – Dr Tarrasch, and its permanent Secretary was Marco, editor of the magazine *Wiener Schachzeitung*, which became the organ of the Union. And although the activity of this organisation soon faded, even so a historic precedent of an association of chess players, about which Staunton had dreamed long before, had been created.

Returning to the arena, Tarrasch reminded everyone of his formidable strength in Monte Carlo 1903: 1. Tarrasch – 20 out of 26; 2.

Maróczy – 19; 3. Pillsbury – 18½; 4. Schlechter – 17 etc. Alas, this tournament was overshadowed by a scandalous incident, which in my view has some historical significance.

'Chigorin arrived from St Petersburg,' wrote the press, 'to experience something incredible: his compatriot, Prince Dadian of Mingrelia, a well-known falsifier of "brilliant" games with unknown players, imagining himself for a few hundred francs to be a chess patron, threatened to resign as president of the tournament committee, if Chigorin, who, it was said, had once offended him, was allowed to play. And the organisers, defending the interests of the gambling-house, and not chess, excluded Chigorin from the tournament.' An unprecedented matter! But what about the other players? Driven by quite understandable material considerations, they swallowed this pill. Only Janowski, who was not playing in the tournament, was genuinely indignant: 'Did Dr Tarrasch, President of the Union of International Chess Masters, really not have sufficient authority to prevent this?... I request that my name be removed from the list of members of the International Union. This decision is final.'

In our days similar 'patrons', trying to put a good face on the matter, act in a more refined way: they tirelessly repeat that their doors are open, and with an obliging smile they invite you to play... under deliberately unacceptable conditions!

After his victory in Monte Carlo, Tarrasch at last sent a challenge to Lasker, and they even signed an agreement to a match, planned for autumn 1904. But fate decreed otherwise: when out skating the challenger fell and suffered a serious fracture, and there was no question of him playing chess for many months...

The super-tournament in Cambridge Springs (spring 1904), where Lasker played after a lengthy interval, produced a super-sensation: going through the whole tournament undefeated and scoring 13 points out of 15(!), the winner was the young American Frank James Marshall (1877-1944). This fearless chess cowboy, a lover of inconceivable complications and traps, had distinguished himself back in Paris 1900, by inflicting the only defeat on the champion. And in Cambridge Springs he finished ahead of Lasker and Janowski, who shared second place, by two whole points!

Marshall promptly challenged the champion to a match, but in reply Lasker demanded a stake of not less than $2,000 from each party. 'For what right have I to prefer one challenger to another?' he wrote to the editor of the magazine *Checkmate*. 'Where could I stop in making allowances? If a challenger cannot satisfy the conditions, it is very likely, if not clear, that the chess world does not consider him entitled by his record to challenge the championship, and consequently he ought to challenge somebody else and show first that he is underrated. It would, in the case of Marshall, for instance, not have been difficult to arrange a match between him and Janowski on the terms proposed.'

Later, remembering Steinitz's sad fate, Lasker gave a clear explanation of his high financial demands: 'If the chess world wishes to experience satisfaction, enjoy some excitement and learn from the strongest, that is, obtain everything that will be given to tens of thousands of modern players and to some extent even to future generations by a match for the world championship, why should the chess world not pay for this? After all, the players sacrifice considerable time and health. Why should the chess world expect all these sacrifices from the masters, why does is not create the conditions, when the entire question, essentially, revolves around... the remuneration!'

In short, Marshall had to play a match with Janowski, who himself was eager for a fight. This 'candidates match' (Paris 1905) was won by the American with a score of +8 -5 =4, after which he issued a challenge to... Tarrasch! The latter immediately accepted the challenge, declaring that he was 'gladdened by the opportunity to play such an opponent.' They again played to the first to win eight games (Nuremberg 1905) and Tarrasch demonstrated who was who: +8 -1 =8. He concluded his speech at the final banquet with a proud tirade:

'After this, my new and greatest achievement, there is no reason to think that in the chess world anyone should be considered higher than me. Indeed: it is far more difficult to beat the young Marshall than the aged Steinitz! I am prepared to play a match with Lasker under acceptable conditions, but I do not intend to challenge him: that should be done by the one who has an inadequate reputation and inadequate successes. My successes over the past 20 years are at least equal to his successes; when two years ago I sent him a challenge, it proved to be in vain. It is a matter for the chess world to arrange this match, if it is of interest... The German Chess Union and the American clubs should establish acceptable conditions, which would induce us, and if necessary force us to join battle. If the chess world wishes, it will obtain a Lasker-Tarrasch match.'

Meanwhile, Marshall did not calm down: after winning the strong tournament Nuremberg 1906, he again threw down the gauntlet to Lasker! And... the champion 'acknowledged defeat,' by lowering the winner's prize to $1,000. The challenger's enthusiastic American supporters gathered the necessary sum and the Lasker-Marshall duel, the first match for the world crown for ten years(!), became a reality. It took place early in 1907 in six USA cities. They played, according to the new fashion, to the first to win eight games. 'If Marshall wins, will he really be acknowledged as world champion?' the magazine *Deutsche Schachzeitung* asked in perplexity.

However, Lasker did not give his opponent the slightest chance. Knowing well Marshall's reckless, excessively optimistic character, he quickly found 'calming measures'.

Game 45

F.Marshall-Em.Lasker

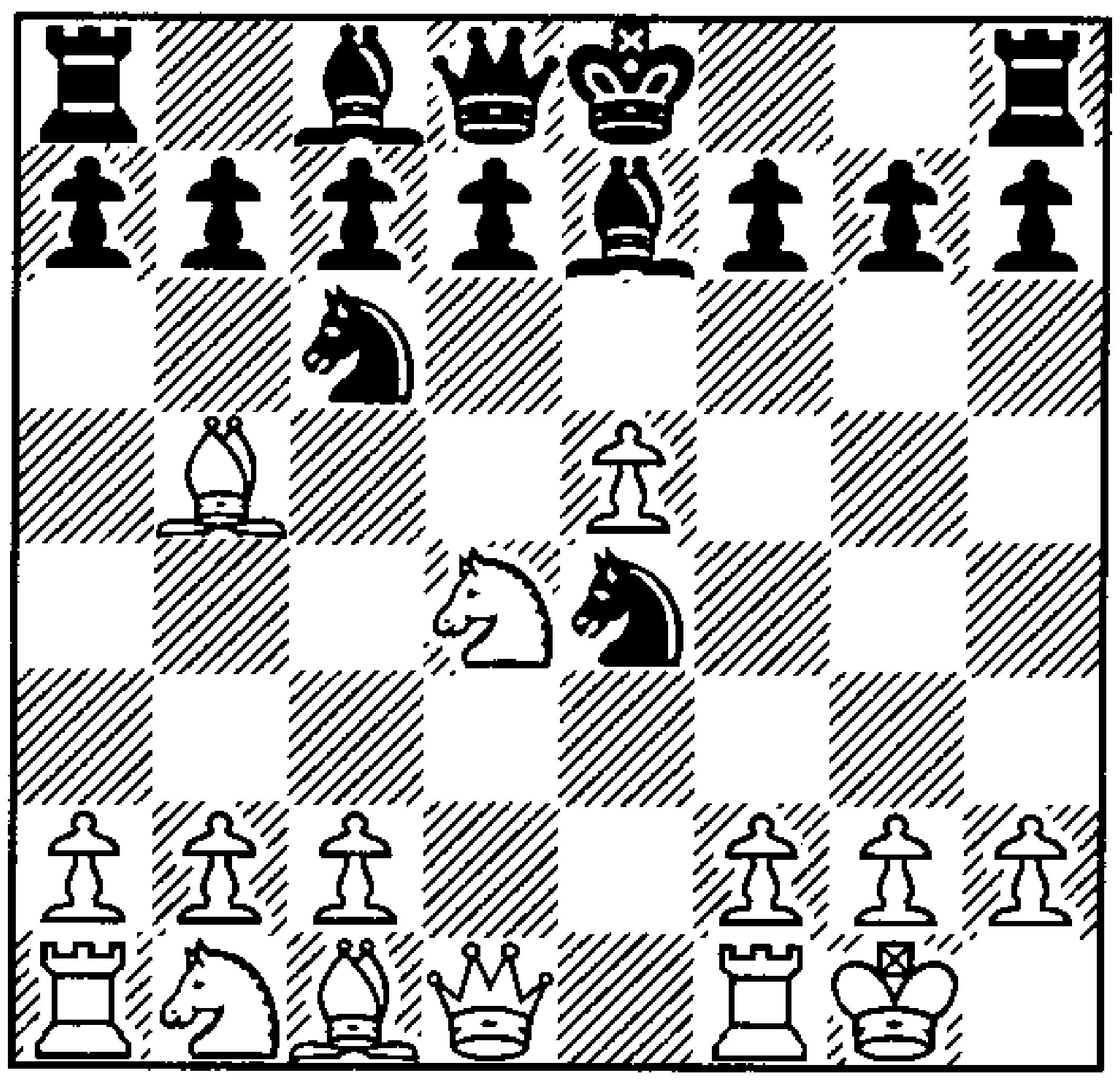
World Championship,
USA 1907, 1st game
Ruy Lopez C65

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6 4 d4 (only 4 0-0 gives chances of an advantage) **4...exd4 5 0-0 ♗e7** (5...a6!?) **6 e5**

The alternative is 6 ♕e2 (6 ♘xd4 0-0 7 ♘c3 ♖e8 equalises Black-Lasker, simultaneous display, USA 1907) 6...0-0 7 e5 ♘e8 8 ♖d1 d5 9 c3!? (9 ♗xc6 bxc6 10 ♘xd4 ♕d7 is equal Berry-Lasker, simultaneous display, USA 1903) or 6 ♖e1 0-0 (6...d6 7 ♘xd4 ♗d7 leads to the Steinitz Defence; 6...a6!?) 7 e5 ♘e8 8 ♗f4 with a mini-plus.

6...♘e4 7 ♘xd4

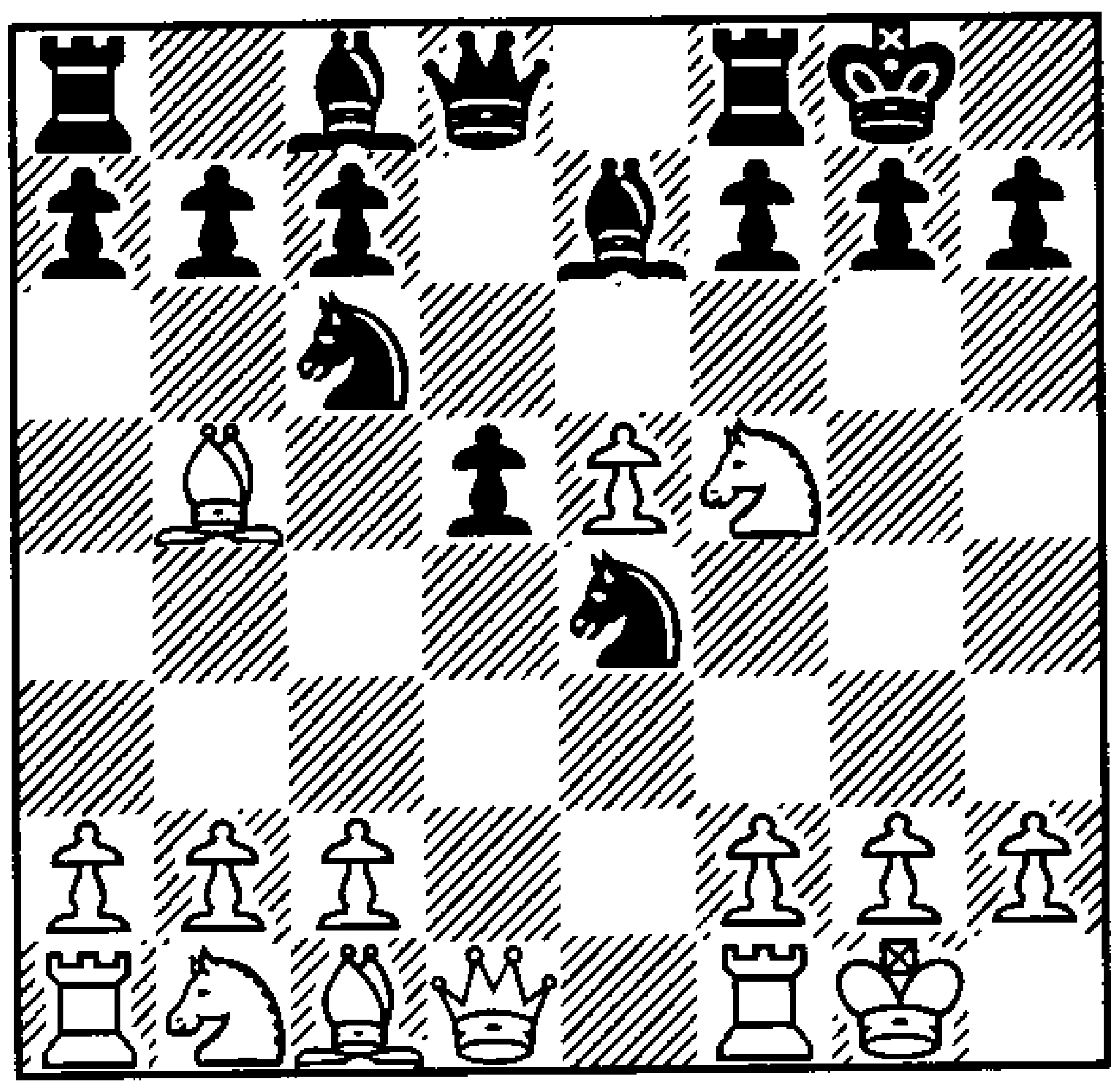
In the game Tal-Furman (25th USSR Championship, Riga 1958) after 7 ♕e2 ♘c5 8 ♖d1 0-0 (8...♘e6!?) 9 ♗xc6 bxc6 10 ♘xd4 ♕e8 11 ♘c3 f6 12 ♘f5 ♗d8 13 ♕c4+ ♘e6 14 ♘d4! White retained some initiative.



7...0-0!

Not wasting a tempo on 7...♘xd4?! 8 ♕xd4 ♘c5, which may lead to a rout: 9 f4!? (9 ♘c3 is quieter) 9...b6? 10 f5! ♘b3 11 ♕e4! ♘xa1 (or 11...♗b7 12 ♗xd7+! ♔f8 13 ♕xb7 ♘xa1 14 f6) 12 f6! ♗c5+ 13 ♔h1 ♖b8 14 e6 ♖g8 15 ♕xh7 (Bird-Steinitz, London 1866).

8 ♘f5 (an attempt to fight for at least the appearance of an advantage) **8...d5**



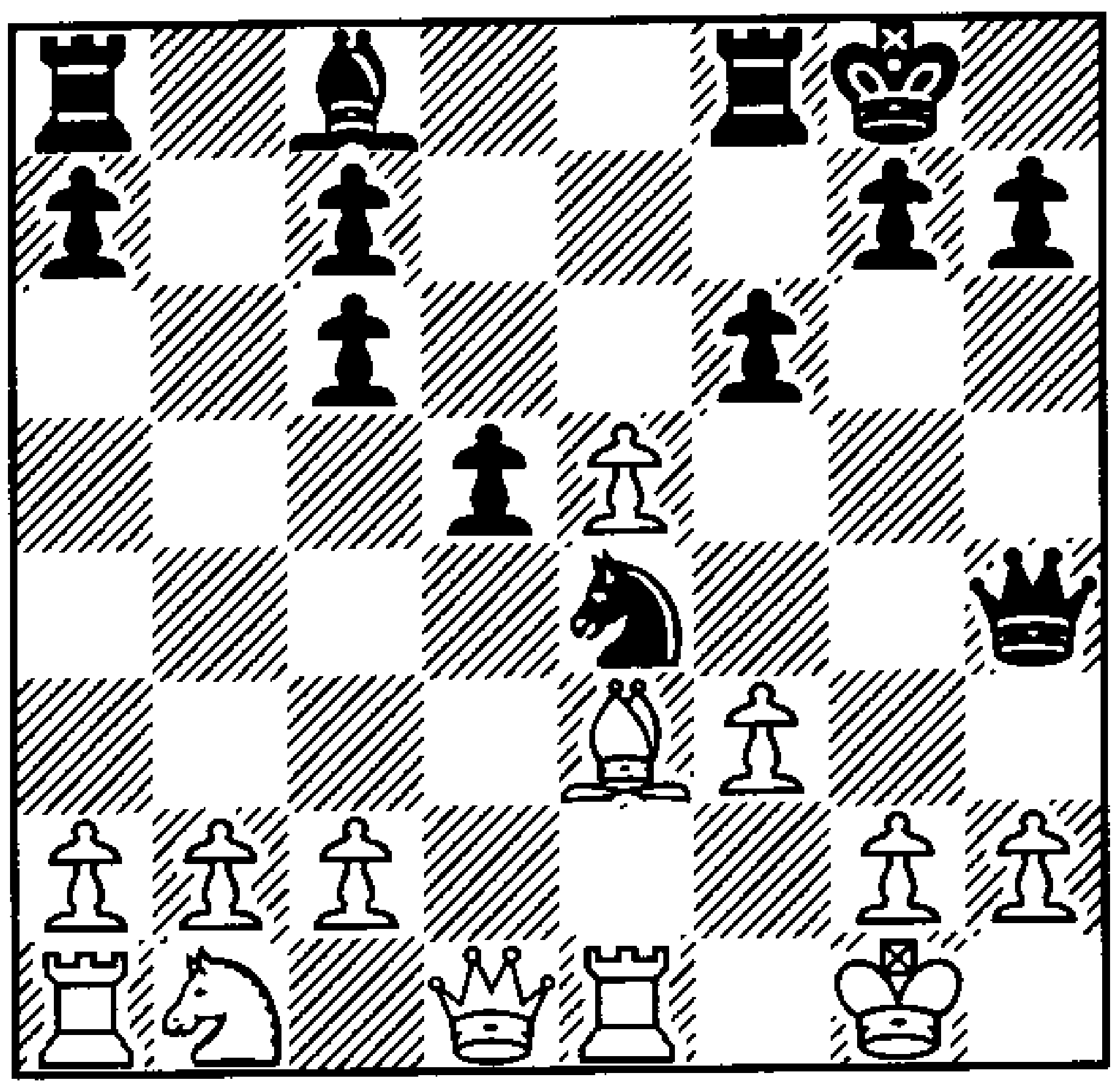
9 ♗xc6

As it later transpired, little good also comes of 9 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7, for example: 10 c3 (10 f3 ♘c5 11 b4?! ♗d7! 12 ♗e2 ♘a4) 10...c6 11 ♗e2 ♘g6 12 f3 ♘c5 13 b4 ♘d7 14 f4 ♖e8 15 ♘d2 ♘df8 16 ♘b3 ♗f5 17 ♘c5 ♖b8 18 g4 ♗c8 19 ♗e3 f6 with equal chances (Spielmann-Eliskases, Linz 1932).

9...bxc6 10 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 11 ♖e1 ♕h4!?

'In search of complications Black avoids 11...f6, which leads to a good position: 12 f3 ♘g5 13 ♗xg5 fxg5 14 ♘c3 ♗e6 followed by ...c6-c5.' (Zak)

12 ♗e3 (the immediate 12 f3!? would perhaps have been better) **12...f6 13 f3**



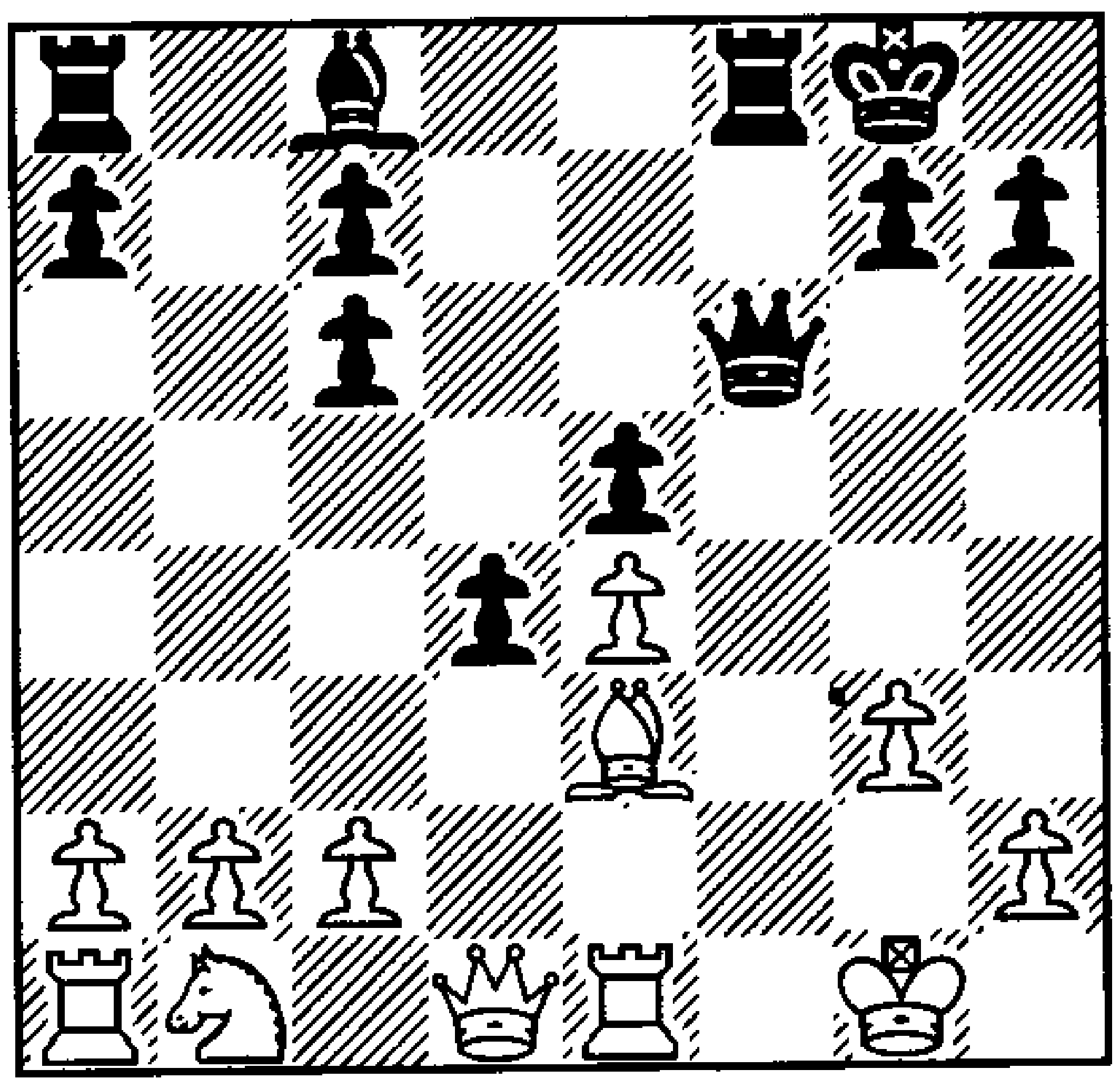
13...fxe5!

13...♘g5 was more prudent, but Lasker makes a psychologically wise choice. It is doubtful whether the world champion calculated all the variations; he more probably sensed that the character of the positions arising after the piece sacrifice would be quite comfortable for him, and that for Marshall they would be unpleasant.

14 fxe4 d4 15 g3?!

And Lasker guessed correctly! Of course, White could not move his bishop: 15 ♗d2? (or 15 ♗c1? ♕f2+ 16 ♔h1 ♗g4) 15...♗g4 16 ♕c1 ♖f2! 17 ♗g5 ♖xg2+! 18 ♔xg2 ♗h3+ 19 ♔h1 ♕f2 and mate. But 15 ♕d2! dxe3 16 ♕xe3 (and ♘d2!) would have retained at least equal chances – here the best would seem to be 16...♖f6 17 ♘d2 ♗g4, not allowing the knight to go to f3.

15...♕f6



16 ♗xd4?!

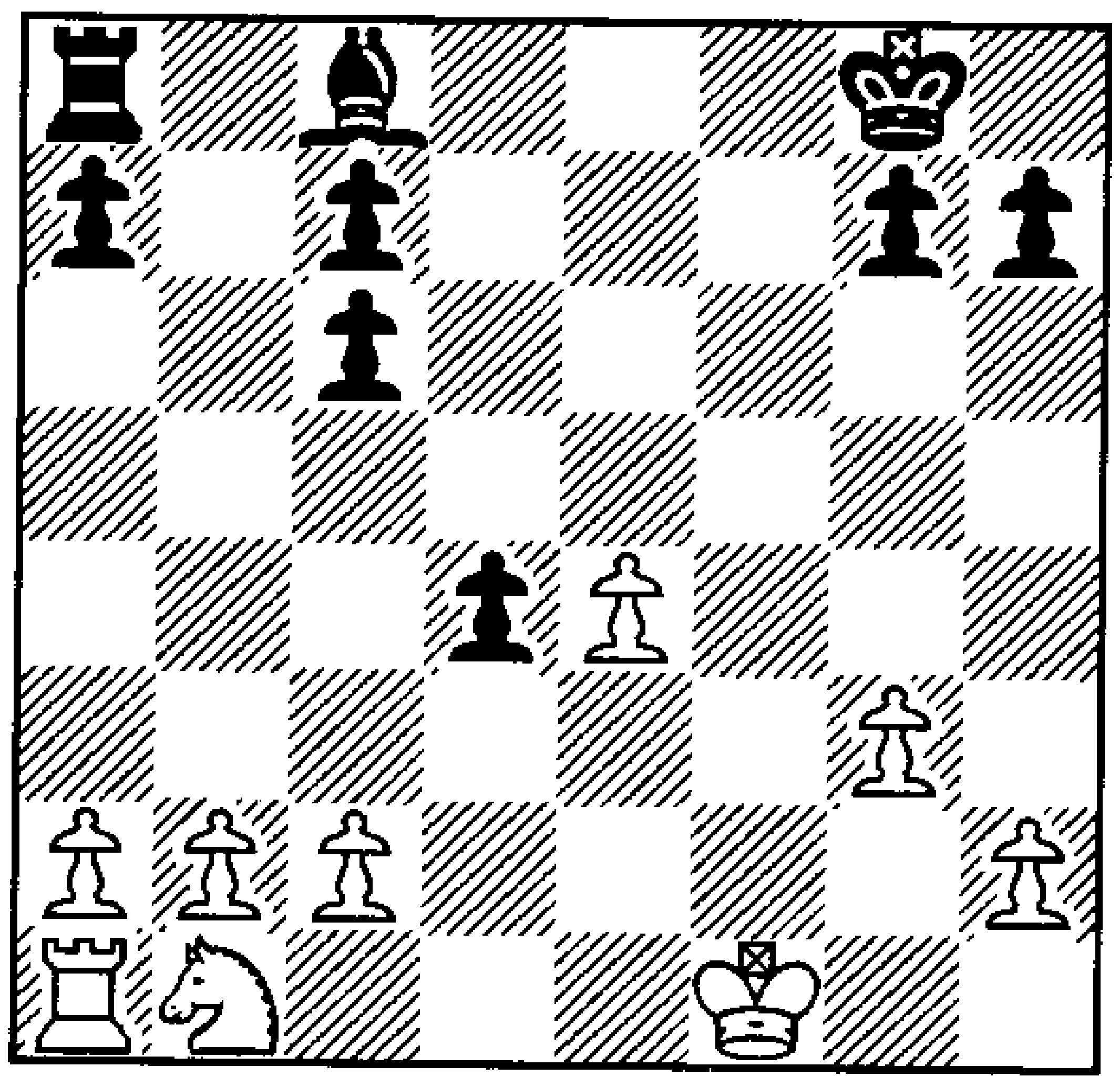
Again what tells is Lasker's knowledge of human nature: Marshall does not want to 'sit' under an attack after 16 ♗d2 (16 ♕d2?! dxe3 17 ♕xe3 ♗h3! is no longer so attractive) 16...♕f2+ 17 ♔h1 ♗h3 18 ♖g1. After this, in Zak's opinion, 'there would have followed 18...h5, and White is helpless against the threat of ...♗g4, since if 19 ♕xh5? or 19 ♗e1? Black gives mate in two moves: 19...♕xg1+ 20 ♔xg1 ♖f1 mate.' (Réti). Here there is some oversight, since 19 ♘a3 ♗g4 20 ♖f1! ♗xd1 21 ♖xf2 ♖xf2 22 ♖xd1 is bad not for White, but for Black. Therefore correct is 18...♗f1! (threatening ...♗e2-f3) 19 ♗e1 ♕e3 20 ♘d2 ♗e2 21 ♕c1 ♗f3+ 22 ♘xf3 ♕xf3+ 23 ♖g2

♕f1+ with not more than perpetual check.

16...exd4 17 ♖f1 ♕xf1+!

There is no point in either 17...♕e5 18 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 19 ♕f3+ ♔e7 20 ♕f4, or 17...♕e7 18 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8 19 ♕xd4 ♗h3 20 ♘c3 ♖d8 21 ♕e3 ♖d6 22 ♘e2 and ♘f4.

18 ♕xf1 ♖xf1+ 19 ♔xf1



When he avoided the dangerous 16 ♗d2 Marshall probably considered this ending to be drawn, but Lasker is of another opinion.

19...♖b8! 20 b3 ♖b5!

In this game the rook truly performs miracles.

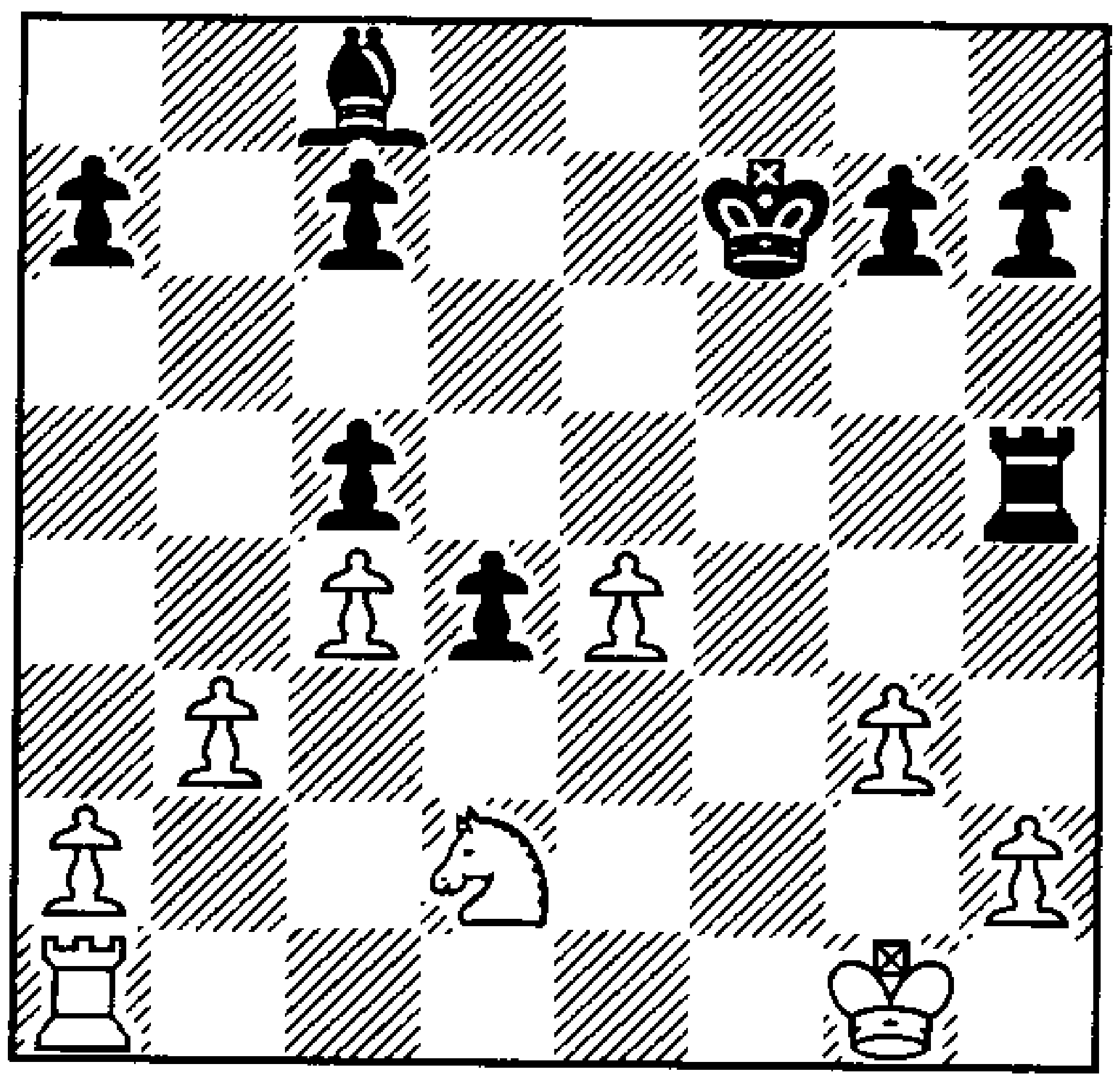
21 c4

One can understand the desire to get rid of the weak c2-pawn, but 21 ♘d2 (not 21 c3? ♖e5 or 21 ♘a3? ♖e5 22 ♖e1 ♖a5; also dubious is 21 a4 ♖c5 22 ♘a3 ♗g4 23 ♔g2 ♖c3 24 ♖f1 d3 etc.) would have enabled White, although not without difficulty, to gain the desired draw:

1) 21...♖c5 22 ♖c1 ♗a6+ 23 ♔f2 (23 ♔e1? ♖c3!) 23...♗d3 (23...♖c3 24 ♘b1!) 24 ♘f3 ♖xc2+ 25 ♖xc2 ♗xc2 26 ♘xd4 ♗xe4 27 ♘e6 ♗b1 28 a3 ♗a2 29 ♘c5;

2) 21...♖h5 22 h4 (22 ♔g2?! ♖c5! 23 ♖c1 ♖c3; 22 ♔g1 ♔f7, and, according to Zak, 'the king begins a decisive invasion') 22...♖c5 23 ♘f3 ♖xc2 24 ♘xd4 ♗h3+ 25 ♔e1 ♖g2 26 ♖c1 ♖xg3 27 ♖xc6 ♖g4 28 ♘f3! ♖xe4+ 29 ♔f2 ♖e7 30 ♖a6 c5 31 ♖c6.

21...♖h5! 22 ♔g1 (after 22 h4? g5! 23 hxg5 ♖h1+ the rook paralyses both white pieces) **22...c5 23 ♘d2 ♔f7**



24 ♖f1+?

The decisive positional mistake: Marshall's imagination dries up in the desert of the endgame! Essential was the active 24 a3! a5 (24...♔e7 25 b4; if 24...♔e6, then not 25 b4?! ♔e5! 26 bxc5 d3, but first 25 ♖f1! Shereshevsky) 25 ♖b1! ♔e7 (25...♔e6 26 b4 axb4 27 axb4 ♔e5 28 bxc5 d3 29 ♖b8 ♗e6 30 ♖d8) 26 b4 cxb4 27 axb4 axb4 (or 27...♗e6 28 bxa5 ♖xa5 29 ♘b3) 28 ♖xb4 ♖a5 29 ♘b3 ♖a2 30 ♖b8 ♗h3 31 ♘xd4 with sufficient counterplay for a draw.

24...♔e7 25 a3?! (alas, this activity is too late) **25...♖h6!** (the rook is on the alert!) **26 h4**

If 26 b4, then 26...♖a6! 27 ♖f3 (27 bxc5 ♖xa3 28 ♘f3 ♗h3 wins for Black) 27...♗g4 28 ♖b3 ♗d1 29 ♖b1 ♗c2 30 ♖c1 d3 etc. And if 26 ♖a1, then 26...a5 27 h4 ♗g4 28 ♖f1 ♖b6!? is good.

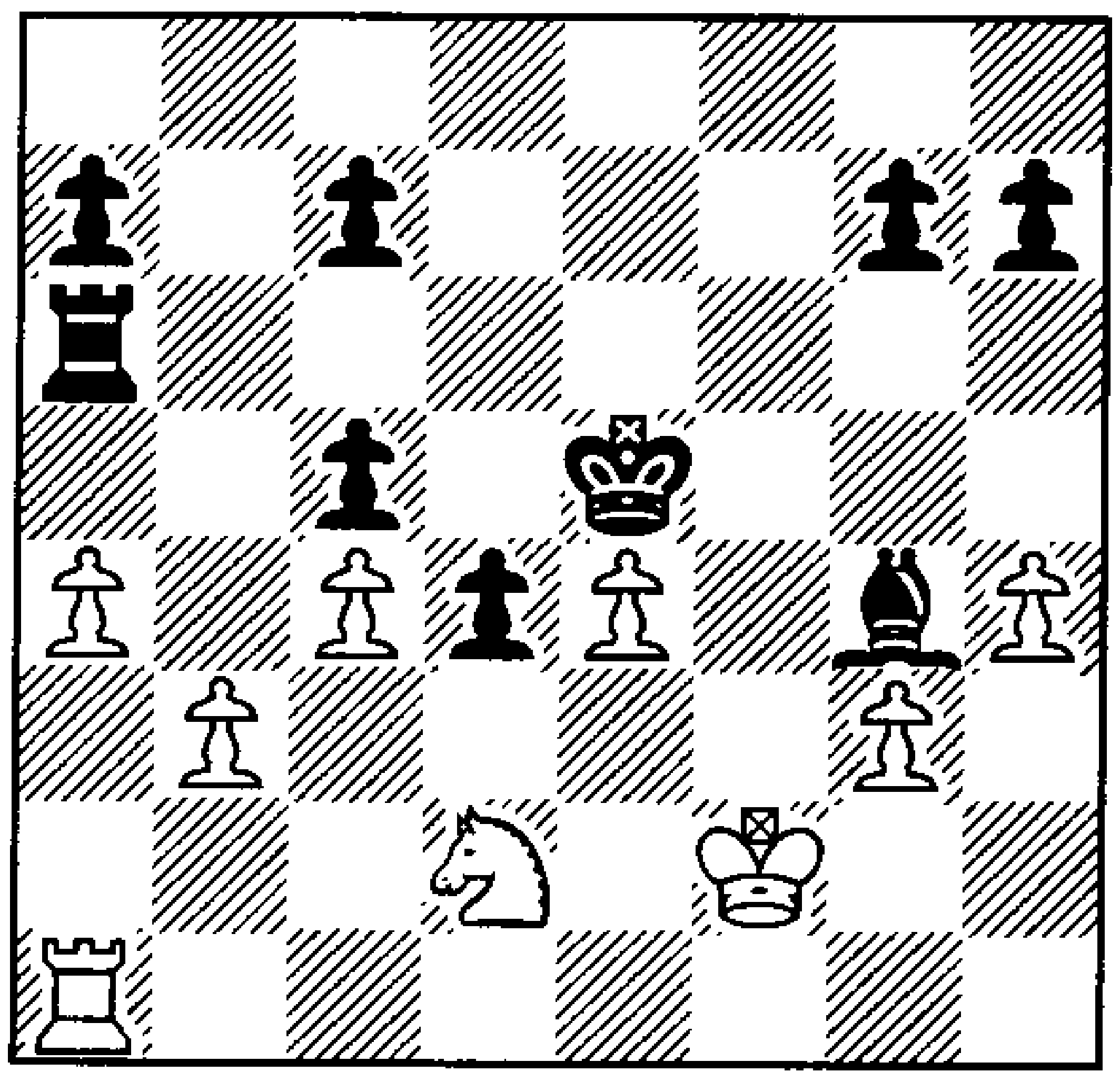
26...♖a6!

As a result of the impressive manoeuvre ...♖b8-b5-h5-h6-a6 Black has an enormous advantage.

27 ♖a1

27 a4 was hardly much better, for example: 27...♗g4 28 ♖f4 h5 29 ♔f2 ♖b6! (29...♔e6 30 ♘f3 is not so clear) 30 ♔e1 a5 31 ♔f2 ♖b8 (31...g6!?) 32 ♔e1 ♔e6, preparing to break through with ...d4-d3 and ...♔e5-d4.

27...♗g4! 28 ♔f2 ♔e6 29 a4 (the rook ending after 29 ♘f3 ♗xf3 30 ♔xf3 ♔e5 is also bad) **29...♔e5**



An amazing picture: only ten simple moves – and White's position is in ruins!

30 ♔g2 ♖f6 31 ♖e1 d3 32 ♖f1 ♔d4

Alas, the heroic rook will not be present to witness Black's triumph...

33 ♖xf6 gxf6 34 ♔f2 c6 35 a5 (or 35 ♘b1 a5 36 ♔e1 ♔xe4 37 ♔f2 ♔d4) **35...a6**

Zugzwang! The rest is clear without any commentary:

36 ♘b1 ♔xe4 37 ♔e1 ♗e2 38 ♘d2+ (38 ♔d2 f5) **38...♔e3 39 ♘b1 f5 40 ♘d2 h5 41 ♘b1 ♔f3 42 ♘c3 ♔xg3 43 ♘a4 f4 44 ♘xc5 f3 45 ♘e4+ ♔f4 46 ♘d6 c5 47 b4 cxb4 48 c5 b3 49 ♘c4 ♔g3 50 ♘e3 b2 0-1**

After this Marshall switched to 1 d4, hoping to successfully employ Pillsbury's favourite attack in the Queen's Gambit. But he received in reply 1...d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 e3 ♘e4!? – another 'Lasker Defence' (later improved by 5...0-0 6 ♘f3 h6 7 ♗h4 ♘e4). In this new way Black won the third game and also the last, the 15th.

The final score of the match, +8 =7 in favour of the champion, indicates that the two players were simply in a different class. Although, for a good 20 years more the challenger was to be one of the best grandmasters in the world, he was known as the 'Don Quixote of chess', and on one occasion, in a game with Lewitzky (Breslau 1912), he landed the inimitable blow 23...♕g3!!, which has been called 'the most brilliant move in chess history'.

Lasker demonstrated his absolute superiority over Marshall, but it was clear to everyone that the real challenger was Tarrasch. This was confirmed by the four-cycle 'tournament of champions' in Ostend 1907: 1. Tarrasch – 12½ out of 20; 2. Schlechter – 12; 3-4. Marshall and Janowski – 11½ etc.

Who are you, Doctor Tarrasch?

After the tournament in Cambridge Springs the world champion remained living in America, where he published his splendid *Lasker's Chess Magazine*. However, four years later the magazine closed due to lack of funds, and Dr Lasker returned to his native Germany. Awaiting him there was his old and implacable opponent – Dr Siegbert Tarrasch (1862-1934).

We have already spoken about the role played by Tarrasch, one of the strongest players since the early 1890s. He was born and grew up in Breslau, the town of Anderssen and Zukertort, where several other masters also lived: Harrwitz, von Scheve, Riemann and Schottländer. It is symbolic that Siegbert attended the same school that Anderssen himself had once done. 'I saw the ageing master only once, admiringly observing his play from a respectful distance,' writes Tarrasch. 'The chess king did not pamper his subjects, only occasionally commanding Riemann or Schottländer to play a game with him.' But the youngster played constantly against masters, he studied the books of Philidor, Stamma, von der Lasa and the *Handbuch* of Dufresne and Zukertort, and his chess strength together with his erudition very quickly grew.

It is not surprising that it was Tarrasch who properly appreciated the ideas of the first world champion and became the first who was able to take Steinitz's teaching to a wide audience in a popular form, being essentially the mentor of more than one generation of masters (he was even called the 'teacher of

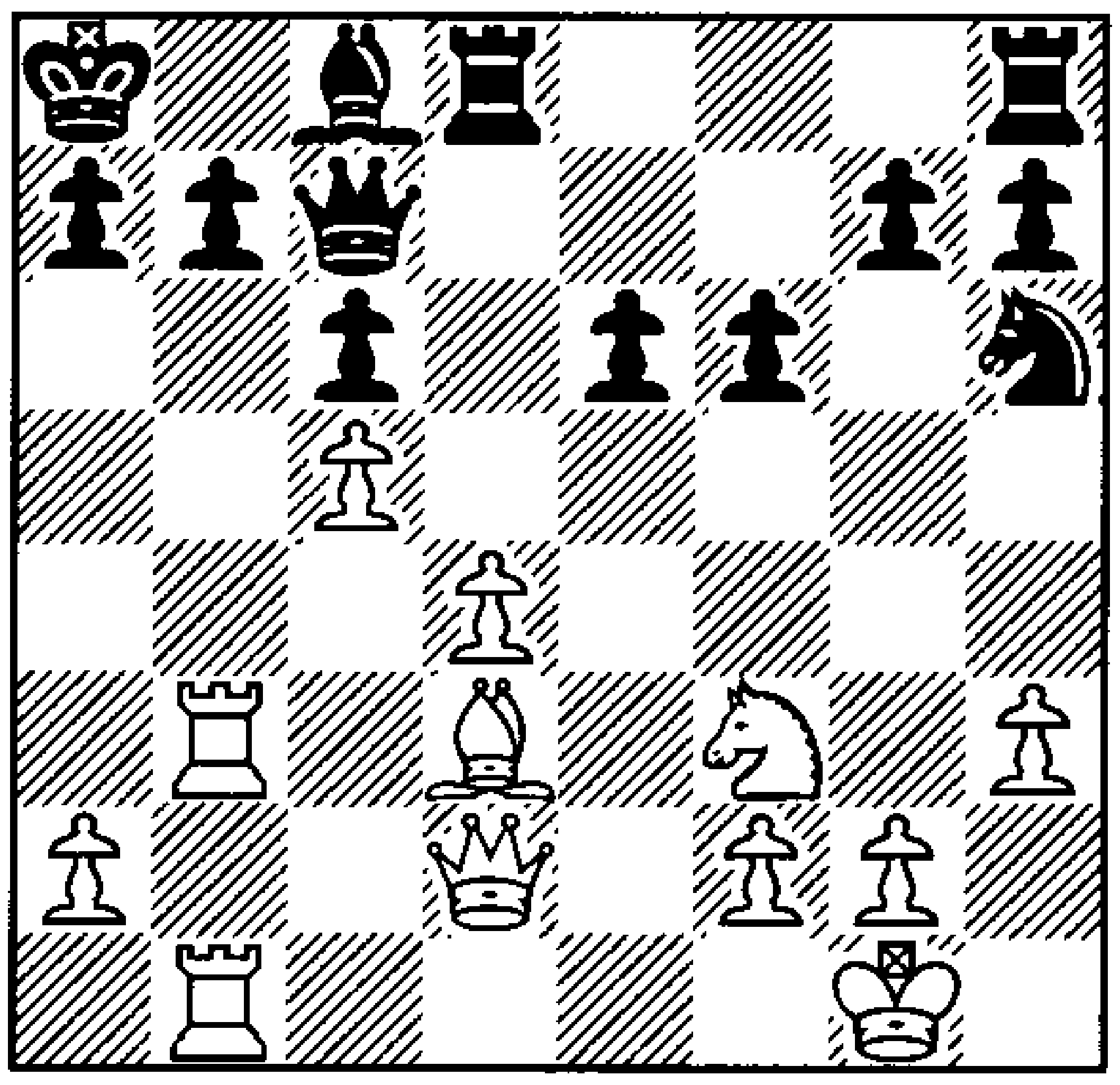
Germany’). This was an important, necessary stage in the development of chess: so that later, in the first quarter of the 20th century, the world should see the appearance of Rubinstein, Alekhine and the hypermodernists, Steinitz’s lessons had to be assimilated first!

From the enormous heritage of Dr Tarrasch, apart his games with Chigorin and Lasker given in the book, we have selected a few more striking examples of his play.

Game 46

S.Tarrasch-I.Gunsberg

Fifth congress of the German Chess
Union, Frankfurt 1887



This position was reached from a French Defence with 3...dxe4, a move criticised by Tarrasch, but the player with the black pieces was not some boy off the street, but the winner of the Fourth Congress and a future challenger for the world crown, a match opponent of Chigorin and Steinitz. Nevertheless White has boldly sacrificed his b-pawn, to create a direct attack on the king.

22 ♖b6!

Tarrasch also considered the unexpected 22 ♗a6?! bxa6? 23 ♕a5! ♕f4 24 g3 winning, but rejected it in view of any neutral reply by Black – for example: 22...♖he8, and nothing is achieved by 23 ♖xb7 ♗xb7 24 ♗xb7+ ♕xb7 25 ♖xb7 ♔xb7 etc.

22...e5!

A timely counter in the centre. 22...♘g8 (22...axb6? 23 cxb6 and ♕a5+) 23 ♖1b4 ♘e7 and ...♘d5 was more passive.

23 ♖1b4 ♖he8

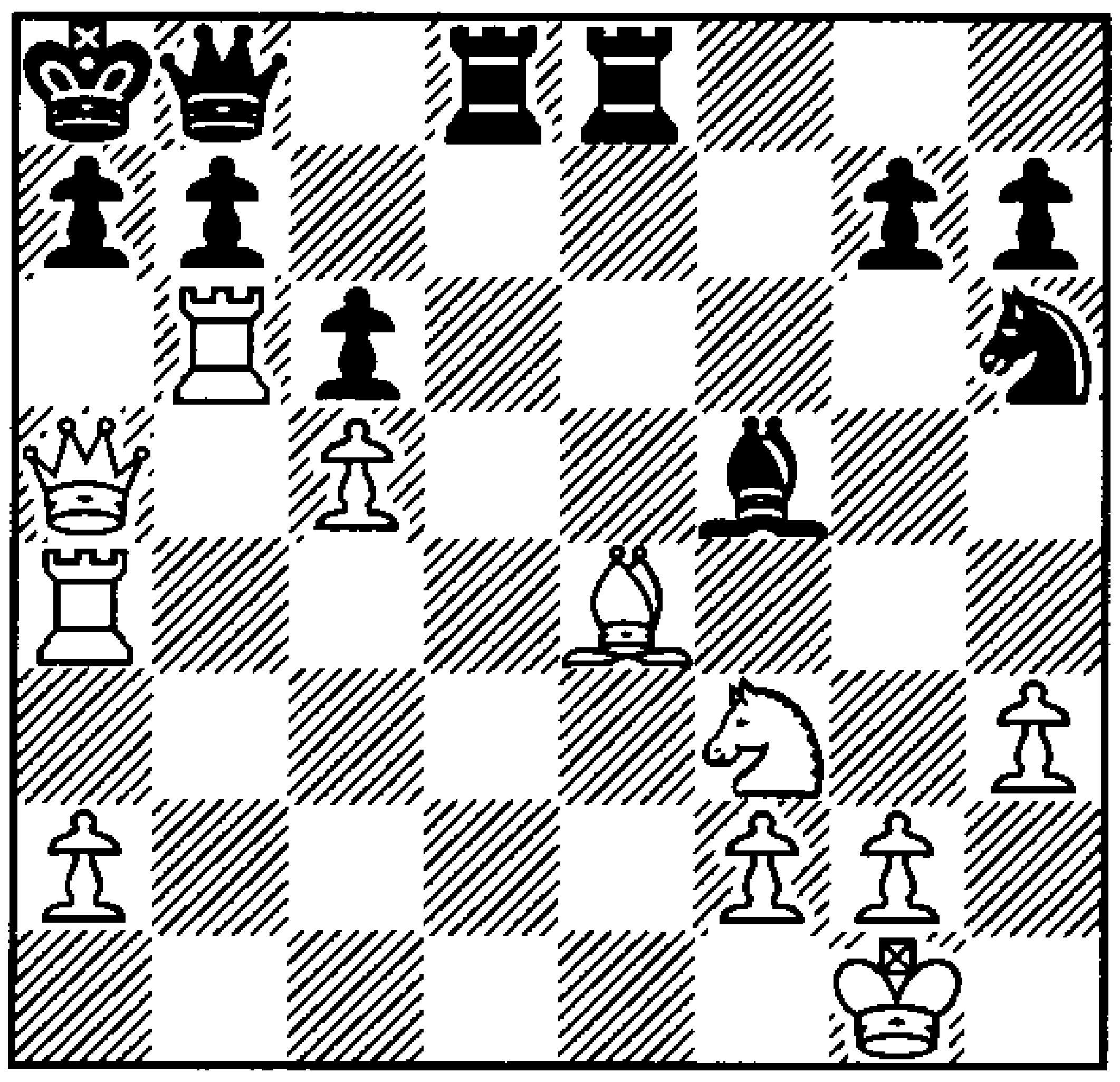
Bad once again was 23...axb6? 24 cxb6, and after the queen moves – 25 ♖a4+ ♔b8 26 ♖a8+! ♔xa8 27 ♕a5+ ♔b8 28 ♕a7 mate.

24 dxe5 fxe5 25 ♖a4 e4

Black could have considered 25...♕b8!? 26 ♕c3 (26 ♘g5 ♗f5 27 ♘e4 ♗xe4 28 ♖xe4 ♘f5 or 28...♘g8) 26...♘f5 27 ♗e4 ♘d4 28 ♘xd4 exd4 29 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 30 ♕xd4 ♕f4, forcing 31 ♖b4 (Neishtadt).

26 ♕a5 ♕b8 27 ♗xe4 ♗f5?

‘An extremely rash move, which loses. After 27...♖d1+! 28 ♘e1 ♘f5 the knight, which for a long time has been standing idle, would have come into play, and the chances would have been roughly equal.’ (Tarrasch)



28 ♖a6!

A pretty stroke, which involuntarily brings the words of Fischer to mind: ‘Tarrasch's play was razor-sharp, and in spite of his devotion to this supposedly scientific method of play, his game was often witty and bright.’

28...♖d1+

This is forced (28...bxa6? 29 ♗xc6+), but it also fails to save Black. When playing 28 ♖a6!, White had to calculate a lengthy forced variation:

29 ♘e1 ♖xe1+ 30 ♕xe1 ♗xe4 31 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 32 ♕xe4 bxa6 33 ♕xc6+ ♕b7 34

♕e8+ ♕b8 35 ♕e4+ ♕b7 36 c6! ♕c7 37 ♕e8+ ♕b8 38 ♕d7!

An elegant 'quiet' move. The helpless knight on h6 illustrates Tarrasch's famous aphorism: a knight on the edge of the board stands badly!

38...♕b1+ 39 ♔h2 ♘f5 40 c7 1-0

When studying the following classic game, it is interesting to compare Tarrasch's comments and those of his eternal critic Nimzowitsch, who in this case was very satisfied with the play of his old colleague.

Game 47

M.Harmonist-S.Tarrasch

Sixth Congress of the German
Chess Union, Breslau 1889
Ruy Lopez C67

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6 4 0-0 ♘xe4 5 d4 ♘d6!?

Tarrasch willingly made this move, regarding it (compared with 5...♗e7 – *Game No.55*) as 'the simplest defence, leading to an equal game.' Later it was successfully played by Pillsbury, then from the mid-1970s by Romanishin, and nowadays the baton has been taken up by Kramnik.

The present game, effectively the original source of a fashionable variation, disclosed many of its basic ideas for Black.

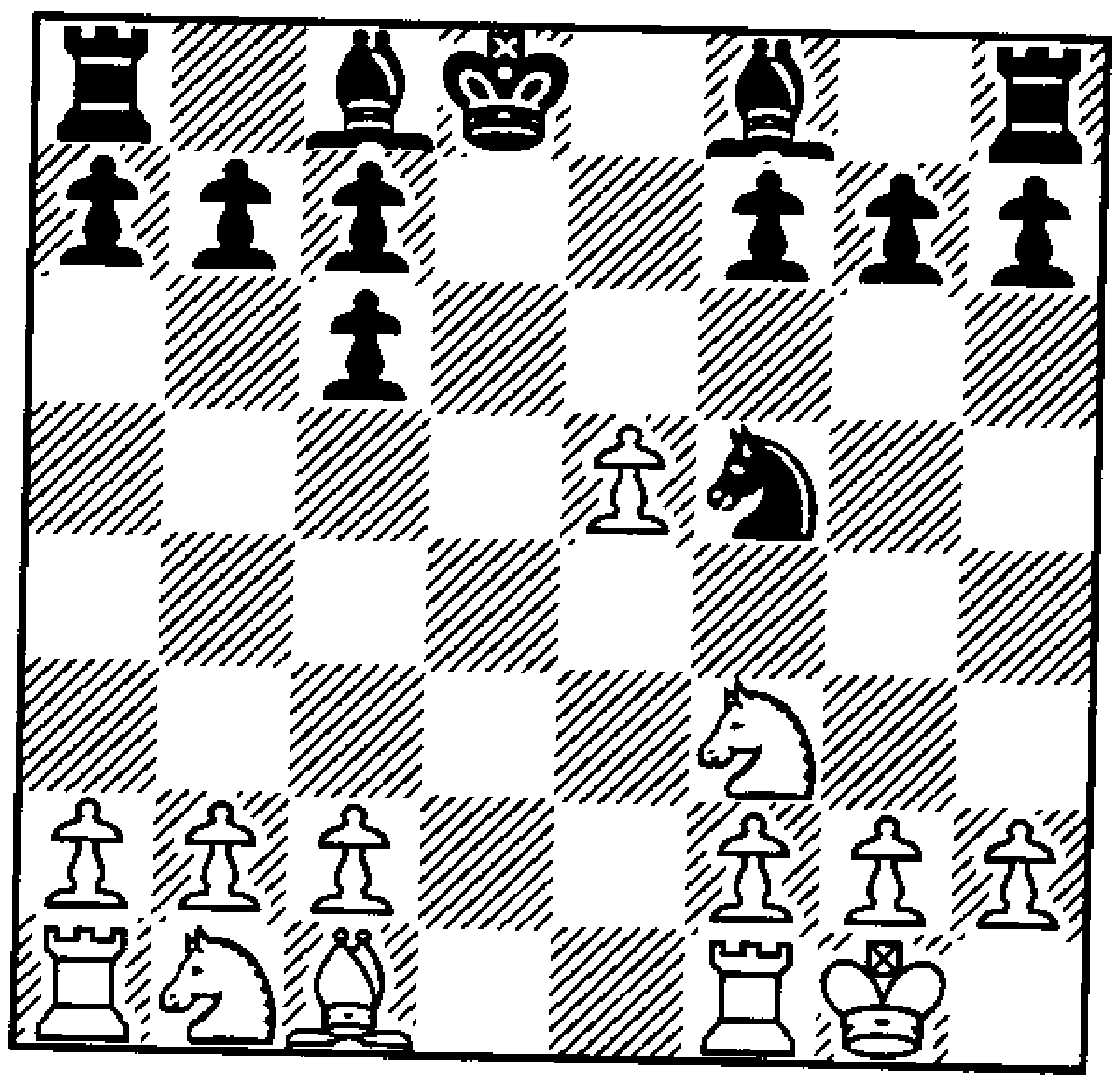
6 ♗xc6

With White the Doctor himself also tried 6 dxe5 ♘xb5 7 a4 d6 (7....♘bd4!?) 8 axb5 ♘xe5 9 ♖e1 ♗e7 10 ♘xe5 dxe5 11 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 12 ♖xe5 ♗d6 with equality or the sharp Janowski Attack 8 e6!? fxe6 9 axb5 ♘e7 etc.

6...dxc6 7 dxe5 ♘f5 8 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8

One of the *tabiyas* of the Berlin Defence, nicknamed, on account of it being so hard to breach, the 'Berlin Wall'. The resources of this complex endgame were underestimated for a long time, until it was played by Kramnik in the London 2000 world championship match.

'Although Black temporarily experiences difficulties in view of the loss of castling, in the endgame, thanks to his two bishops and pawn majority on the queenside, he gains good winning chances.' (Tarrasch) Moreover, compared with sharp set-ups, here the value of each move is not so great and Black can vary his ways of defending.



The position contains numerous nuances and it is very difficult to find the correct line of play for White. For the moment one thing is clear: he has a certain number of useful moves (such as ♘c3 and h2-h3), but after that everyone plays how he wishes. In the 21st century it would appear that White is gradually finding some ways, although it is a lengthy, painful and far from obvious process. In short, at the present day the variation is still alive.

9 ♗g5+?!

A waste of a tempo: in any case the black king has to move from d8. More logical is 9 ♘c3 h6 with the following possibilities:

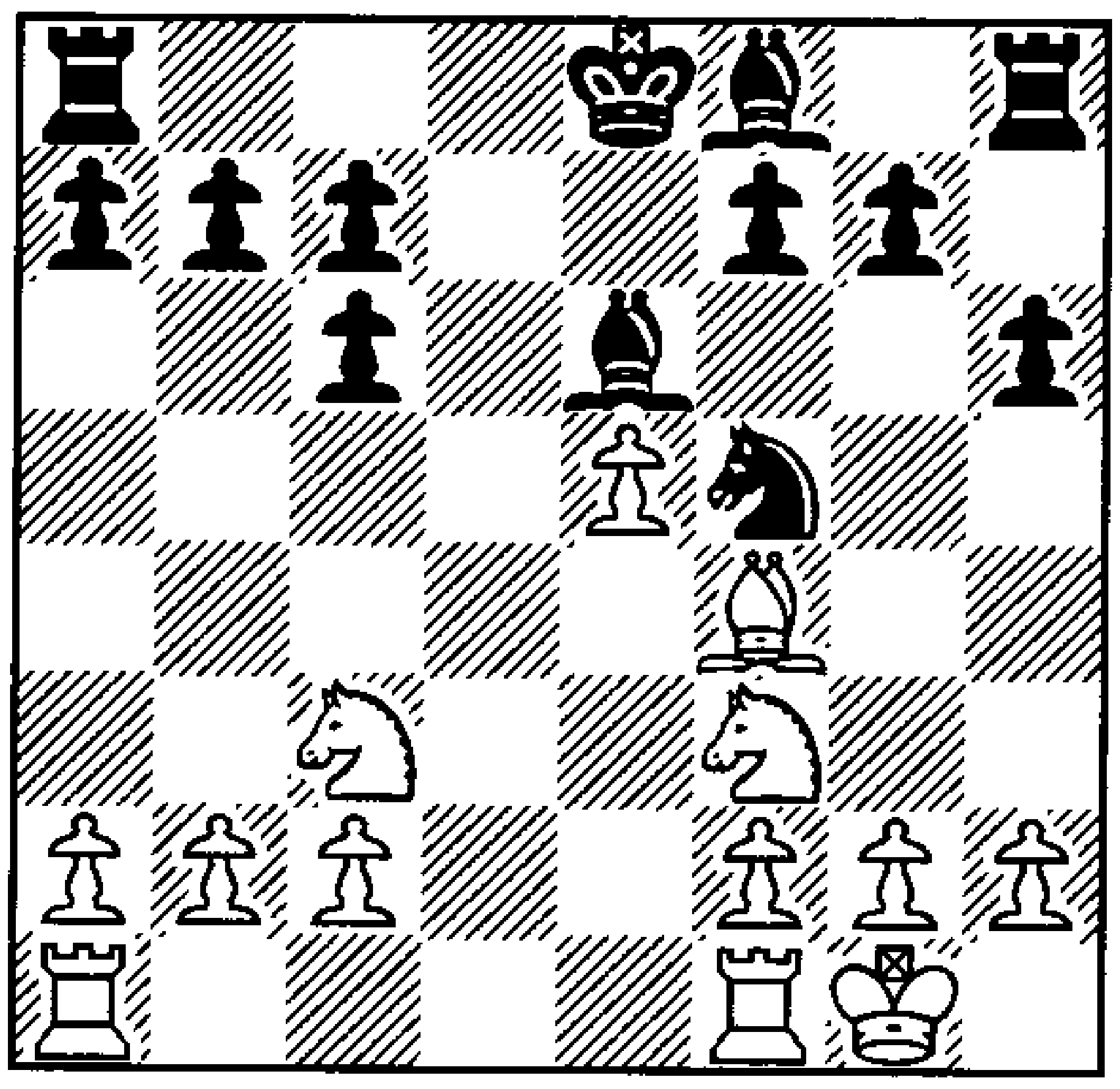
1) 10 b3 (10 ♗d2 ♗e6 11 ♘e2 c5 12 ♗c3 is also unclear, Tarrasch-Lasker, Hastings 1895) 10...♗e6 11 ♗b2 ♗e7 (11...♔c8!? Romanishin) 12 ♖ad1+ ♔c8 13 ♖fe1?! (13 ♘e2!) 13...g5! 14 ♘e4 b6?! (14...♖e8) 15 ♘d4? (15 ♘d6+! ♗xd6 is level) 15...♘xd4 16 ♖xd4 ♔b7 17 ♘f6 a5 18 a4 c5 19 ♖d3 c4 20 bxc4 ♗xc4 21 ♖d4 ♗e6 22 ♘e4 ♖hd8 23 ♖ed1 ♗f5! 24 f3 ♗xe4 25 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 26 ♖xd8 ♗xd8 27 fxe4 ♔c6 28 ♗a3 b5 29 axb5+ ♔xb5 and Black won (Porges-Tarrasch, Dresden 1892);

2) 10 ♖d1+ ♔e8 11 h3 (11 b3 g5 or, ac-

cording to Pillsbury, 11...♗b4 with the idea of 12 ♗b2 ♗xc3!?) 11...a5 12 ♗f4 (12 b3 ♗b4!, Fritz 5-Anand, Frankfurt rapidplay 1998) 12...♗e6 13 g4 ♘e7 14 ♘d4 ♘d5 15 ♘ce2 ♗c5 16 ♘xe6 fxe6 17 c4 ♘b6 18 b3 with a small plus (Kasparov-Kramnik, London 9th matchgame 2000);

3) 10 h3 ♗d7!? 11 b3 ♔e8 (or 11...♔c8 12 ♗b2 b6 13 ♖ad1, Kasparov-Kramnik, London 3rd matchgame 2000; Shirov-Kramnik, Astana 2001) 12 ♗b2 ♖d8 13 ♖ad1 ♘e7 14 ♖fe1 ♘g6 15 ♘e4, and the careless 15...♘f4? gave White a very strong attack after 16 e6! (Kasparov-Kramnik, Astana 2001).

9...♔e8! (but not 9...♗e7?! 10 g4! ♘h6 11 h3) **10 ♘c3 h6 11 ♗f4 ♗e6**



'White's pawn majority has but slight mobility.' (Nimzowitsch)

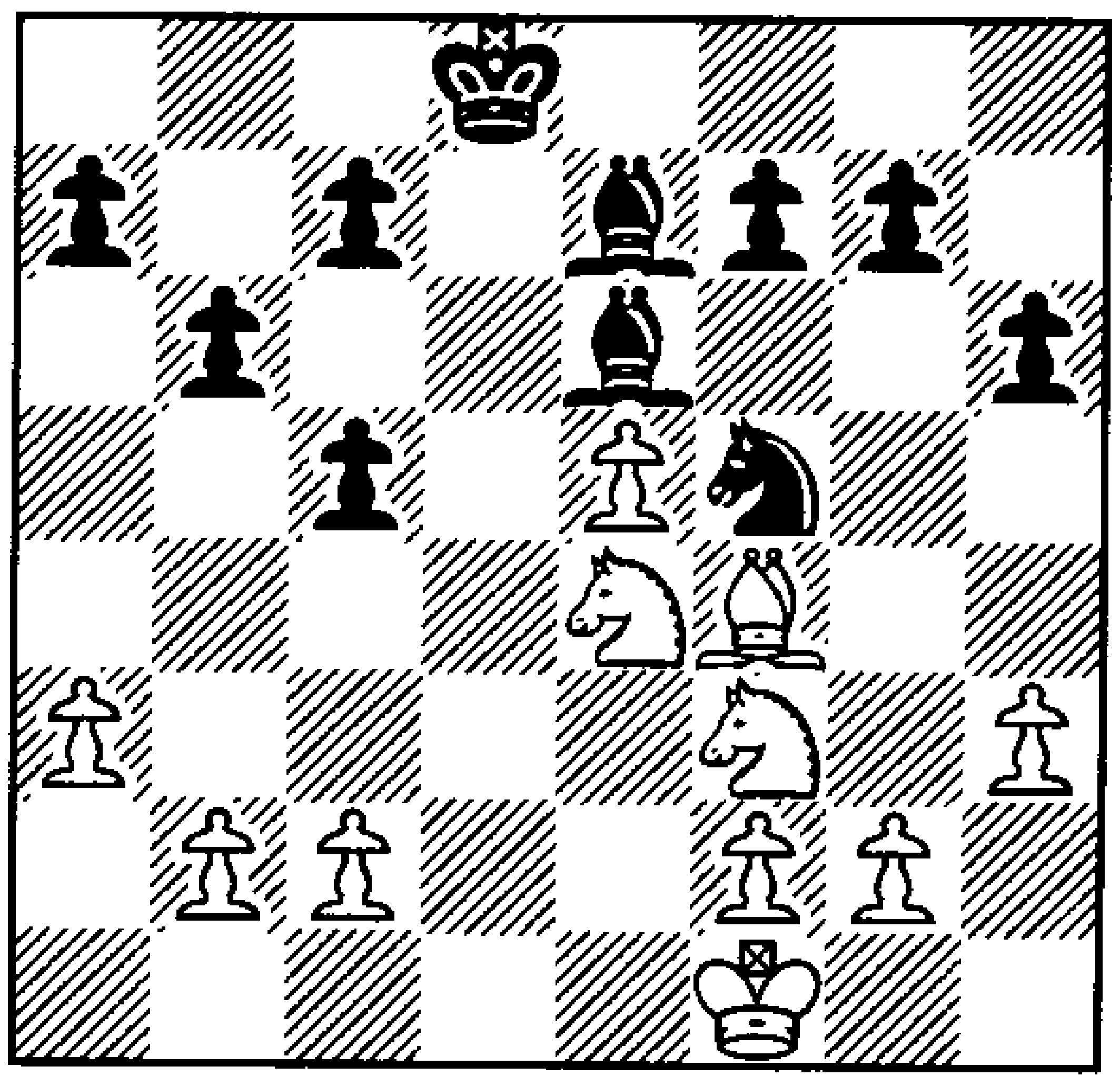
12 ♖ad1 ♖d8 13 ♘e4 c5

'By threatening 14...♘d4, Black provokes an exchange of rooks, giving him the opportunity to bring his king's rook into play.' (Tarrasch)

14 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 15 ♖d1+ ♔c8 16 h3 (with the threat of 17 g4 ♘e7 18 ♘xc5) **16...b6 17 ♔f1 ♗e7 18 a3**

'White is clearly having difficulty finding a good plan. After 18 ♔e1? ♗xa2 shutting in the bishop by 19 b3 does not work in view of 19...c4, for example: 20 ♘ed2 (if 20 ♘fd2, then 20...cxb3 and 21...♘d4) 20...cxb3 21 cxb3 ♗b4 22 ♔f1 ♗xd2 23 ♘xd2 ♘d4.' (Tarrasch)

18...♖d8 19 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8



'The exchange of rooks has sensibly increased the radius of action of Black's king.' (Nimzowitsch)

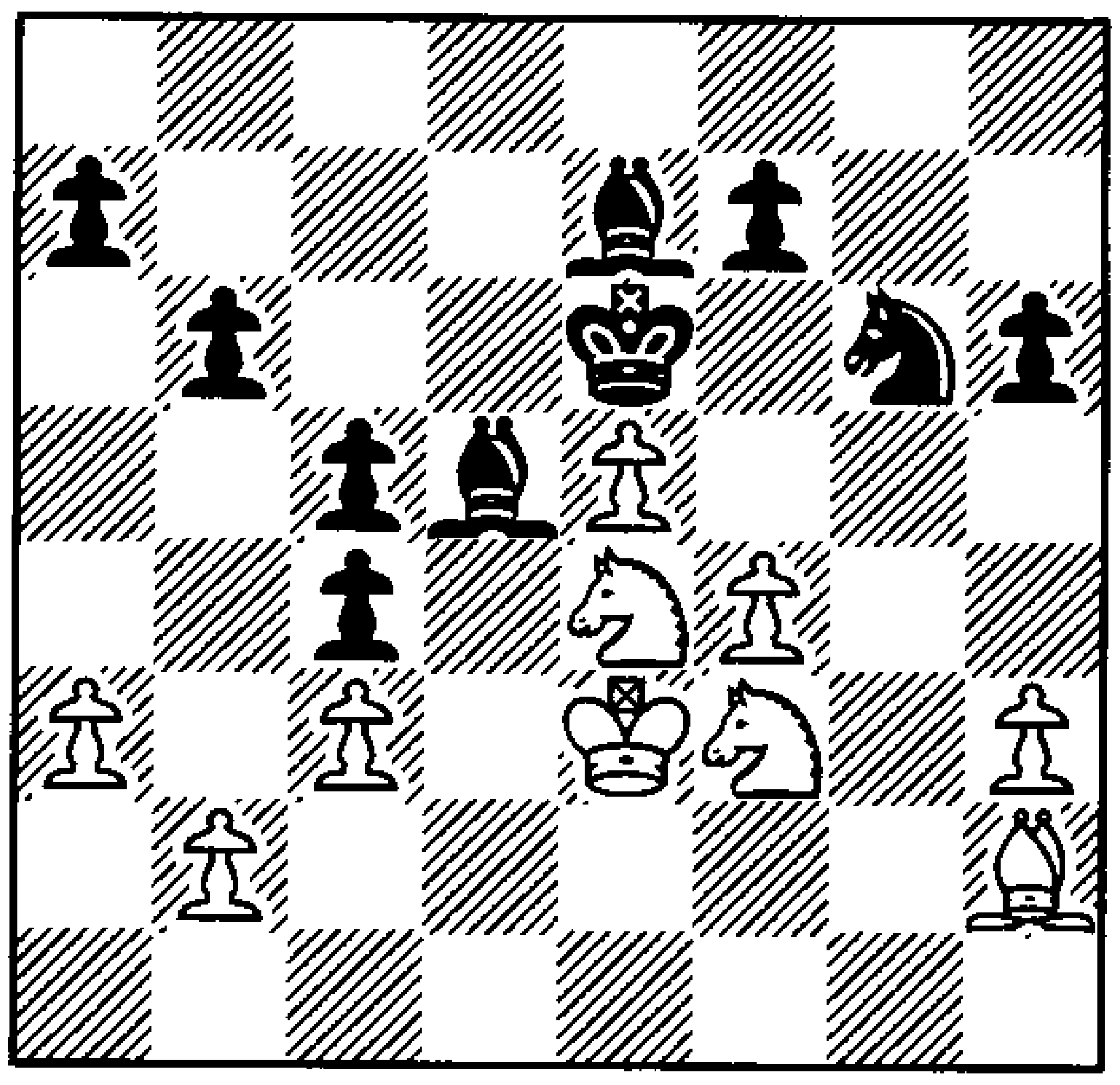
20 c3

'This move, weakening the queenside still further, is necessary due to the threat of 20...♘d4. Now Black gains more and more space.' (Tarrasch)

20...♗d5 21 ♘fd2 ♔d7 22 ♔e2 g5

22...♘h4 23 g3 ♘g6 24 ♔e3 ♔e6 25 ♘f3 is unclear.

23 ♗h2 ♘h4 24 g3 ♘g6 25 f4 ♔e6 26 ♔e3 c4 27 ♘f3 gxf4+ 28 gxf4 (threatening both 28 ♘d4+ and the unexpected 28 f5+ ♔xf5 29 ♘d4 mate!) **28...c5!**



Nimzowitsch gives this game as an illustration of the power of two bishops in the fight against a pawn majority, and this position as an example of the miraculous action of the blockade: 'In the position now reached

White's pieces are fairly well shut in. This gratifying state of affairs has followed almost automatically from Black's successfully executed blockade of White's e5-pawn and in particular his f4-pawn.'

29 ♘g3 ♘h4 (preventing f4-f5) **30 ♘xh4 ♗xh4 31 ♘e4 ♗e7** (otherwise 32 ♘d6) **32 ♗g1 ♗c6**

'The intention is ...♔d5 followed by ...♗d7-f5, driving the knight yet further back.' (Nimzowitsch)

33 ♗f2 ♗d7 34 ♗g3?!

'As was correctly pointed out by Metger, with 34 ♘d6! White would have retained chances of a draw; after 34...♗xd6 35 exd6 there are opposite-colour bishops left on the board.' (Tarrasch) This was also pointed out by Nimzowitsch. I should only like to add 34...b5 35 ♗g3 f5 36 ♗f2 with equality.

34...♔d5 35 ♘f2?

A fatal retreat. 35 ♘d6!? ♗xd6 36 exd6 ♗xh3 37 f5 ♗xf5 38 ♗h2 was essential, although it would not yet have guaranteed a draw: 38...♗d7 must be considered followed by the unhurried transference of the king and the advance of the b-pawn.

35...h5 36 ♔f3

Or 36 h4 ♗f5 and the knight cannot come into play.

36...♗f5

'Blockade!' Nimzowitsch exclaims joyfully, and he sums up: 'We can say with some justice that the restraint of the pawn majority once in operation carries with it automatically the hemming in of the knights; that is to say the blockading pawns may easily develop into obstructions to their own knights.'

37 ♔e3 b5! 38 ♔f3 a5 39 ♔e3 (White is in a kind of stalemate) **39...b4 40 ♔f3 ♔c6 41 axb4**

If 41 h4, then the reply 41...♔b5 42 ♘e4 ♔a4 wins.

41...cxb4 42 cxb4 axb4 43 ♘e4 ♔d5 44 ♘d6 ♗xd6 45 exd6 c3 46 bxc3 b3 0-1

It is obvious that this type of win ultimately gave birth to one of the famous Tarrasch aphorisms: 'The future belongs to he who has the bishops.' One also recalls the classic ending of the game Tarrasch-Rubinstein (San Sebastian 1912), where, it is true, the Doctor was the victim...

Both in his play, and in his commentaries, Tarrasch aimed to follow general rules, and he methodically formulated them, completing Steinitz's work. Honour and praise to him for the fact that nowadays these rules are known by any graded player! Of course, certain of his aphorisms sometimes provoke a smile – for example, 'if one piece stands badly – the whole game stands badly', or 'a knight on the edge of the board always stands badly'. In a number of cases it is possible to gain an advantage even with a 'bad' knight: we can recall, among others, the games Lasker-Schlechter (Vienna/Berlin 10th matchgame 1910 – *Game No.58*) and Kasparov-Karpov (London/Leningrad 16th matchgame 1986). However, Tarrasch's 'dogmas' are not eternal truisms, but merely instructional material presented in an accessible and witty form, those necessary rudiments from which one can begin to grasp the secrets of chess...

The following game, played after a tournament race lasting 36 days and an exchange of blows in the play-off match, decided the fate of first prize at Vienna 1898.

Game 48
S.Tarrasch-H.Pillsbury
Play-off match for first prize,
Vienna 1898, 3rd game
Four Knights Game C49

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 (avoiding the Berlin Defence!) **4...♗b4 5 0-0 0-0 6 d3 d6 7 ♗g5 ♗xc3 8 bxc3 ♘e7**

Pillsbury's favourite manoeuvre. Later they began to give preference to Metger's move 8...♕e7 (Kiel 1893) with the idea of 9 ♖e1 ♘d8 10 d4 ♘e6 or 10...♗g4.

9 ♗c4

'Objectively stronger is 9 ♘h4!' (Tarrasch)

For example: 9...♘g6 10 ♘xg6 fxg6 11 ♗c4+ ♔h8 12 f4! h6 13 fxe5 dxe5 14 ♗h4 g5 15 ♗g3 ♕e7 16 d4 with advantage (Janowski-Spielmann, Nuremberg 1906) or 9...c6 10 ♗c4 ♗e6? (10...d5 11 ♗b3 ♕d6 is correct) 11 ♗xf6 gxf6 12 ♗xe6 fxe6 13 ♕g4+ ♔f7 14 f4! with a typical attack (Capablanca-Steiner, Los Angeles 1933).

9...♗e6

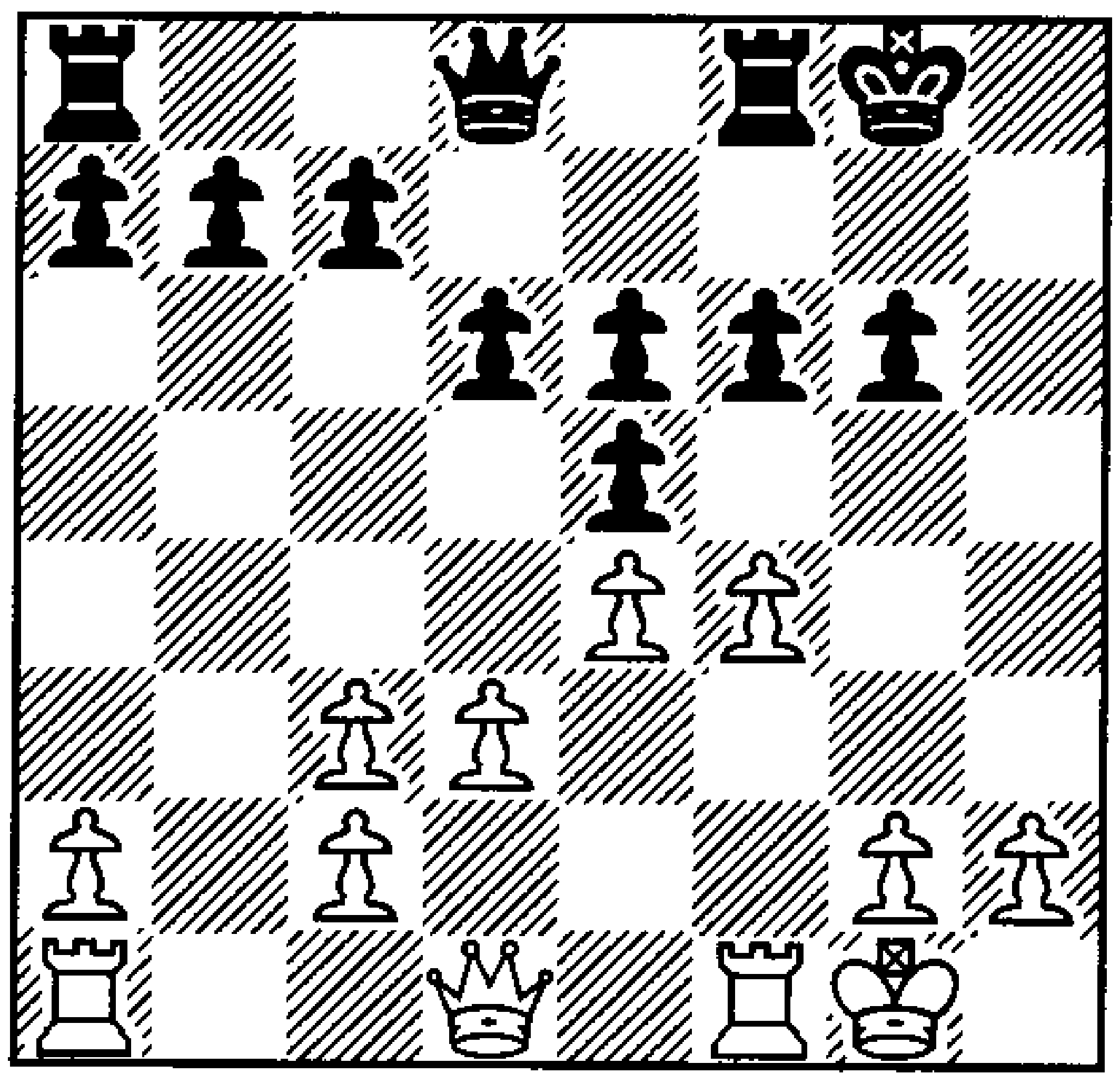
Eleven years later in his match with Janowski (Paris 1909) Lasker improved Black's play with 9...♘g6! 10 ♘h4 ♘f4! 11 ♗xf4 exf4 12 ♘f3 ♗g4 (12...♗e6!?) and gained excellent prospects after both 13 h3 ♗h5 14 ♖b1 b6 15 ♕d2 ♗xf3 16 gxf3 ♘h5 17 ♔h2 ♕f6 (second game), and 13 ♕d2 ♗xf3 14 gxf3 ♘h5! (fourth game).

10 ♗xf6

Janowski also tried 10 ♗b3!? ♗xb3 11 axb3 ♘d7 12 d4 f6 13 ♗e3 ♘g6 14 ♕d3 ♔h8 15 ♘d2 a6 16 f4.

10...gxf6 11 ♗xe6 fxe6 12 ♘h4 ♘g6 13 ♘xg6 hxg6 14 f4!

It is amusing that, several years later, in another triumphant tournament for him (Ostend 1907), Tarrasch crushed in similar fashion... the obstinate Janowski, the third prizewinner at Vienna 1898.



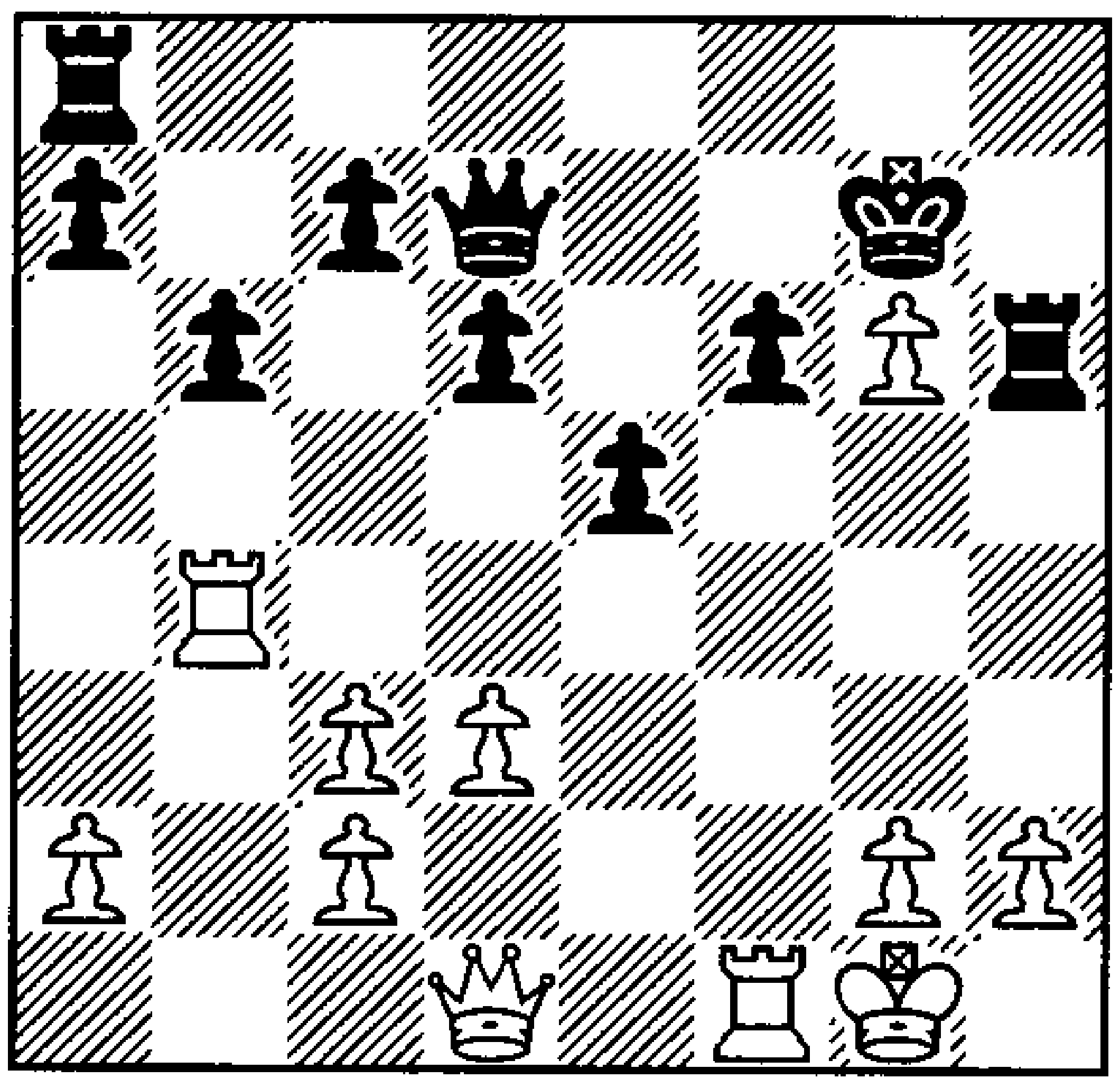
14...♔g7?!

Trying to repair 'the hideous position of the kingside pawns', Tarrasch suggested 14...f5, after which the commentators recommended 15 fxe5 dxe5 16 ♕b1!? b6 17 ♕b3 ♕d6 18 exf5 gxf5 19 ♖ae1 with an edge for White.

15 f5 exf5 16 exf5 ♖h8 17 fxg6 ♖h6

Very dangerous for Black is 17...♔xg6 18 ♕g4+ ♔f7 19 ♖f3 ♕e7 20 ♖af1 ♖h6 21 ♖g3 ♖ah8 22 ♖xf6+! ♕xf6 (22...♔xf6? 23 ♖f3 mate; 22...♖xf6 23 ♕g7+ ♔e6 24 ♕xh8 wins) 23 ♖f3 with the threat of ♕d7+.

18 ♖b1! (in order to switch the rook to the kingside with gain of tempo) **18...b6 19 ♖b4 ♕d7**



20 ♖xf6!

A spectacular blow, which was not foreseen by any of the masters studying the position in a neighbouring room. They expected the not altogether clear 20 ♕f3 ♖f8.

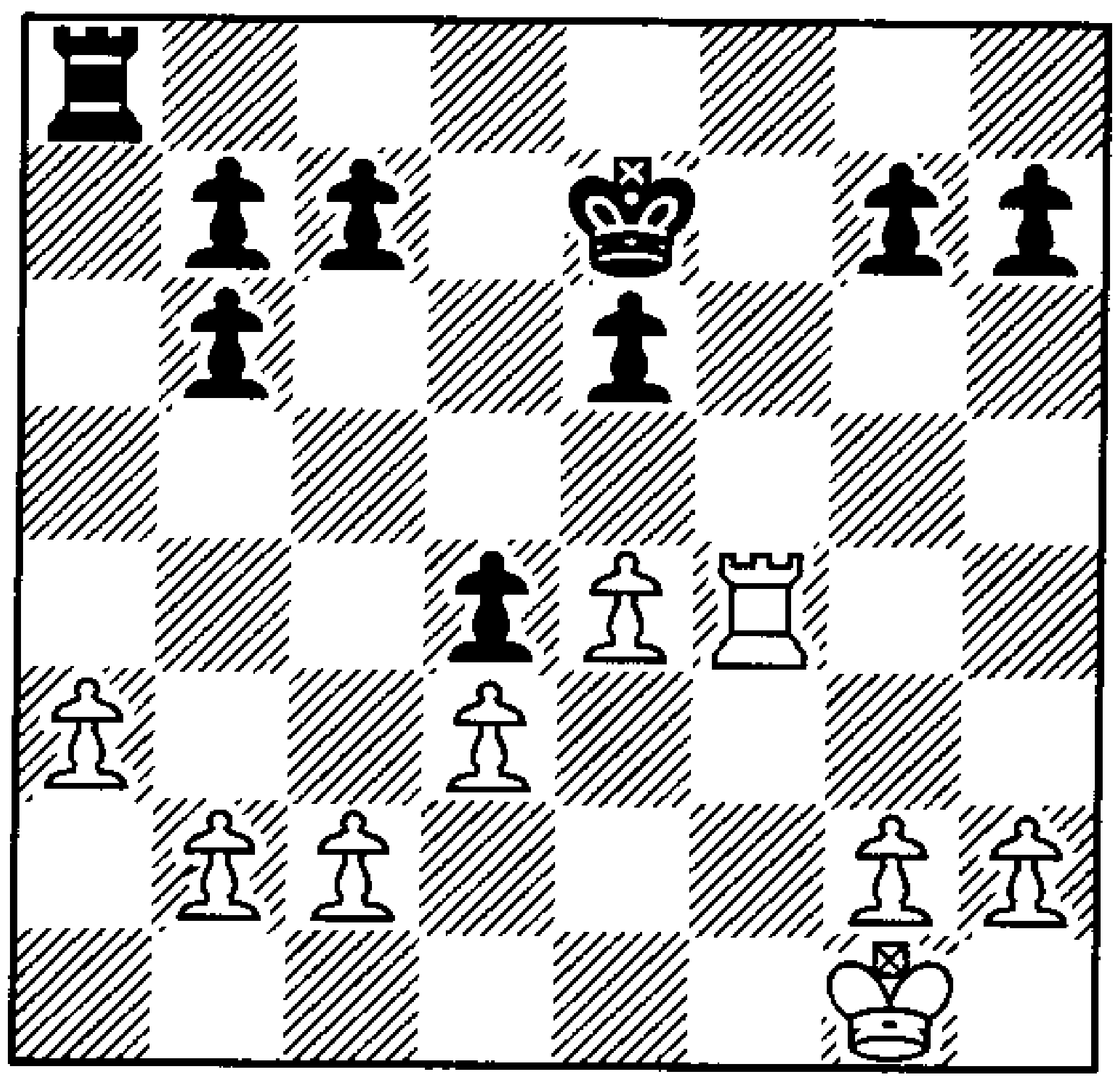
20...♔xf6 21 ♕f3+ ♔g7 (if 21...♔xg6, then 22 ♖g4+ ♔h7 23 ♕e4+ ♔h8 24 ♕xa8+) **22 ♕xa8 c5 23 ♖b1 ♖xg6 24 ♖f1 ♕e7 25 c4,** and White converted his advantage: **25...e4 26 ♕xe4 ♕xe4 27 dxe4 ♖g4 28 ♖e1 ♔f6 29 g3 ♔e5 30 c3 ♖g7 31 ♔g2 ♖b7 32 a4 a6 33 h4 b5 34 axb5 axb5 35 cxb5 ♖xb5 36 ♔h3 c4 37 ♔g4 ♖b2 38 h5 ♖c2 39 ♖h1 ♖a2 40 h6 ♖a8 41 h7 ♖h8 42 ♔g5 ♔xe4 43 ♔g6 ♔d3 44 ♔g7 ♖xh7+ 45 ♔xh7 ♔xc3 46 ♖d1 1-0**

Earlier we saw how casually Lasker overcame in the endgame the victor at Cambridge Springs, Marshall (*Game No.45*). Something similar was achieved a couple of years before that by Tarrasch.

Game 49

F.Marshall-S.Tarrasch

Candidates match,
Nuremberg 1905, 7th game



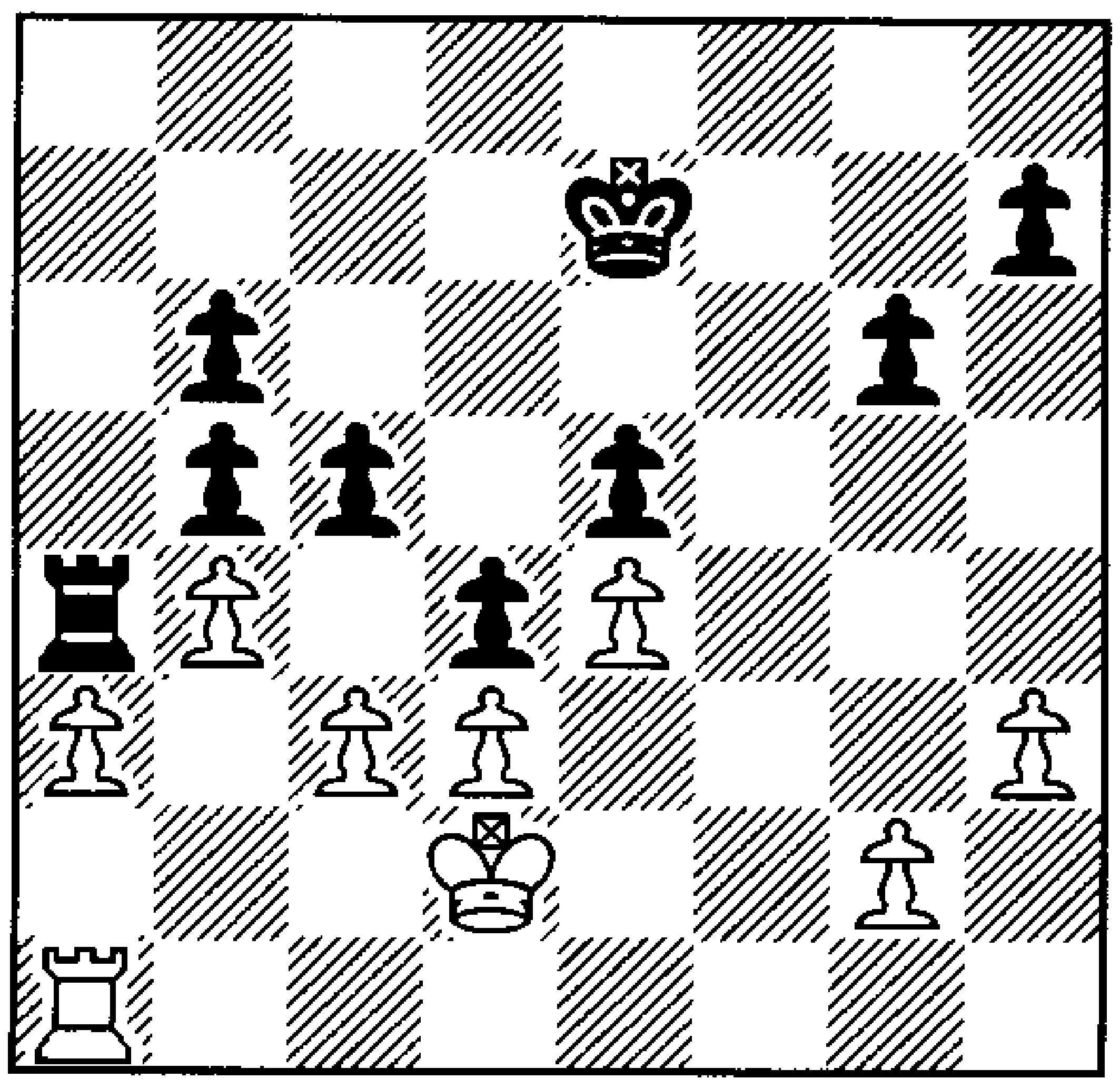
20...♖a5!? (far more lively than 20...e5 21 ♖f5 ♔e6 with a level game) **21 ♔f1?! ♖c5 22 ♖f2 ♖b5! 23 b3 ♖h5!**

It has to be agreed that this rook is no less 'rabid' than Lasker's...

24 h3 b5! 25 b4 ♖g5 26 ♖f4 e5 27 ♖f2 ♖g6 28 ♖f5 ♖e6 29 ♔e2?

Marshall has no feeling for 'simple' positions. After 29 ♖h5! White does not have even a hint of a problem: 29...♖a6 30 ♖xh7 ♔f6 31 ♖h8 ♖xa3 32 ♔e2 or 29...h6 30 ♔e2 g5 31 h4.

29...g6 30 ♖f1 ♖a6 31 ♖a1 b6 32 ♔d2 ♖a4 33 c3 c5



34 cxd4!

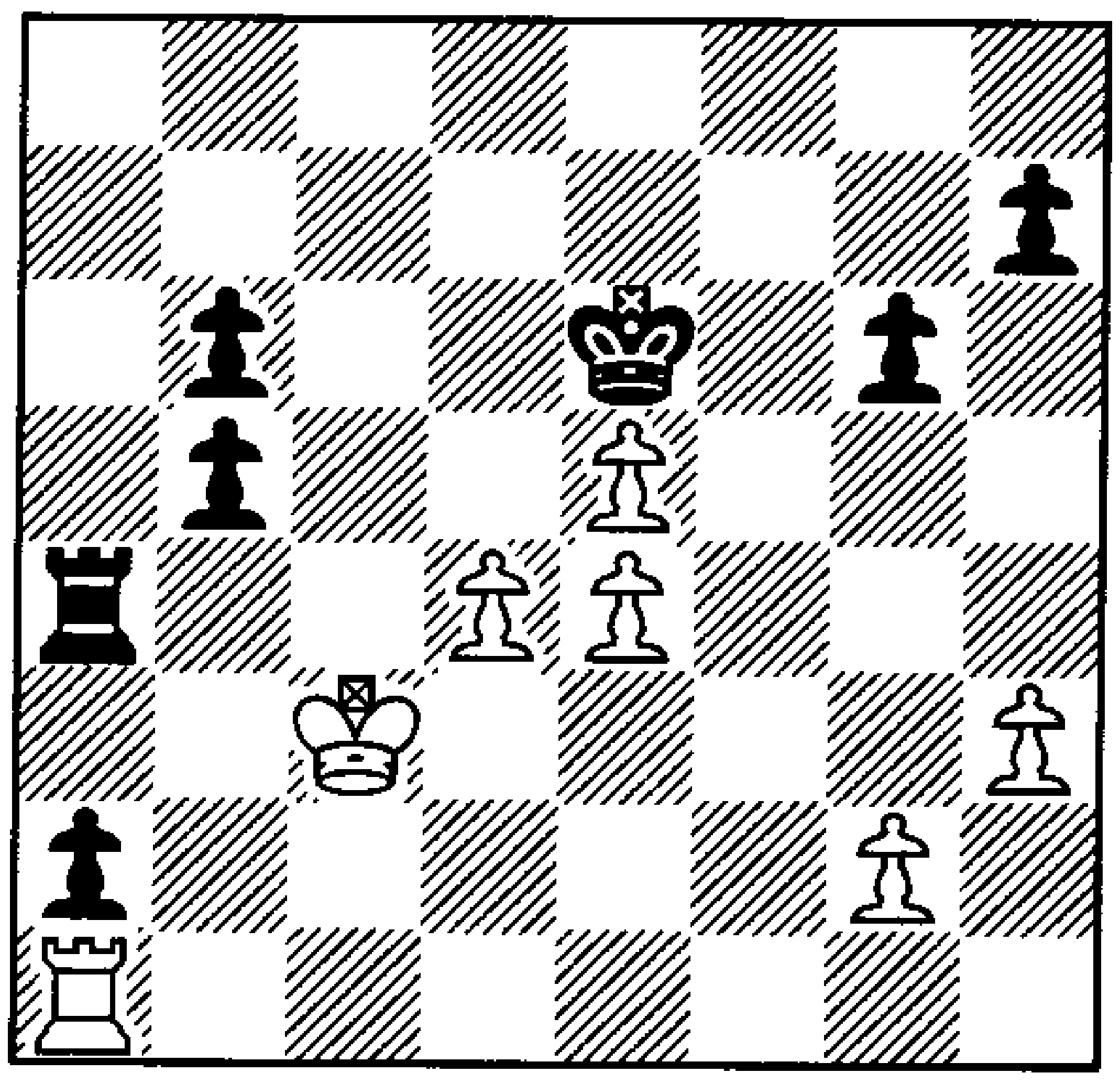
When the time came to calculate, the USA champion rejected 34 ♔c2 dxc3 35 ♖b1?! ♔d6 36 ♖b3 cxb4 37 ♖xb4 ♔c5!, and the computer suggests that he was right: 38 ♖xa4 bxa4 39 ♔xc3 b5 40 h4 h5 41 g3 b4+! 42 axb4+ ♔b5, or 38 ♖b3 b4 39 axb4+ ♔d4 40 ♖xc3 ♖a2+ 41 ♔b3 ♖a3+ 42 ♔xa3 ♔xc3 43 ♔a4 ♔xd3 44 ♔b5 ♔xe4 45 ♔xb6 ♔d5 46 b5 e4 47 ♔c7 e3 48 b6 e2 49 b7 e1♕ 50 b8♕ ♕e5+ 51 ♔c8 ♕xb8+ 52 ♔xb8 ♔e5 and Black wins in both cases.

34...cxb4

Nothing was achieved by 34...exd4 35 bxc5 bxc5 36 ♖b1 ♖a5 37 ♔c2, for example: 37...♔d6 38 ♔b3 ♔e5 39 ♖c1 c4+ 40 dxc4 bxc4+ 41 ♖xc4 ♔xe4 42 ♖c7 d3 43 ♖e7+ ♔d4 44 ♖d7+ ♔e3 45 ♖e7+ ♔f2 46 ♖d7, or 37...c4 38 dxc4 bxc4 39 ♖d1 d3+ 40 ♔c3 ♖a4 41 ♖d2 ♔e6 42 ♔d4 with a level game.

35 dxe5 ♔e6 36 d4 bxa3 37 ♔c3 a2

Black has set his opponent many problems, and Marshall is unable to hold out...



38 g4?

Strangely enough, 38 h4! h5 39 g3 would still have given a draw: 39...♔e7 40 ♔d3 ♖a3+ 41 ♔c2 ♖xg3 42 ♖xa2 ♖g2+ 43 ♔b3 ♖xa2 44 ♔xa2 g5 45 hxg5 h4 46 d5 h3 47 d6+, or 39...♔d7 40 ♔d3 ♖a3+ 41 ♔c2.

38...g5 (now White is in zugzwang) **39 ♔d3 b4 40 ♔c4 b3+ 41 ♔xb3 ♖xd4 42 ♖xa2 ♖xe4 43 ♖a6 ♖e3+ 44 ♔c2 ♖xh3 45 ♖xb6+ ♔xe5 46 ♖b4 ♖e3 47 ♔d2 ♖e4 0-1**

And now a well-known and instructive game by the follower of the first world champion, following in the footsteps of the classic game Steinitz-Sellmann (*Game No.16*), where the outcome was also decided by White's occupation of the d4-square.

Game 50
S.Tarrasch-R.Teichmann
San Sebastian 1912
French Defence C14

1 e4 e6

It should be remembered that the Doctor also played this opening masterfully with Black, even when Chigorin chose the rare plan with 2 ♕e2 (*Game Nos.27, 30*).

2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3

Back in 1890 Tarrasch introduced the 'very good continuation of the attack' 3 ♘d2. By contrast, he had attached a question mark to 3 e5 since the time of his win over Louis Paulsen (Nuremberg 1888), and in San Sebastian 1912 he had a critical encounter on this theme with Nimzowitsch (*Game No.92*).

3...♘f6

Incidentally, the variation with 3...♗b4, which (in some countries) bears the name of its developer Nimzowitsch, was tried by Tarrasch back in a game with Gottschall (Nuremberg 1888), and after 4 e5 ♘e7 5 f4?! c5 6 a3 ♗xc3+ 7 bxc3 c4 8 ♘f3 ♕a5 9 ♕d2 ♘bd7!? 10 ♘h4 ♘b6 he carried out the blockading plan with the manoeuvre of a minor piece to a4, which half a century later was to be successfully employed by Botvinnik – for example, against Tolush (14th USSR Championship, Moscow 1945).

4 ♗g5

Also good is the 'pure' Steinitz variation 4 e5 ♘fd7 5 f4, as in the aforementioned game with Sellman.

4...♗e7

Nowadays it is fashionable to fight for equality with Rubinstein's simplifying 4...dxe4. Tarrasch considered this, like 3...dxe4, to be unacceptable (the centre is conceded!), but experience has confirmed that Rubinstein was right. Generally speaking, Tarrasch often carried over his popular ideas of chess philosophy, which were suitable for beginners, to crucial disputes with the world's leading players – and sometimes he was proved wrong...

5 e5 ♘fd7 6 ♗xe7 (6 h4 – *Game No.112*) **6...♕xe7 7 ♕d2**

Englisch's move (Paris 1878). Steinitz used to play 7 f4, while earlier Tarrasch himself preferred 7 ♗d3, with which he beat Barthmann (Nuremberg 1883). He regarded this win, along with his game against Noa (Hamburg 1885), as the 'prototype' of the present encounter.

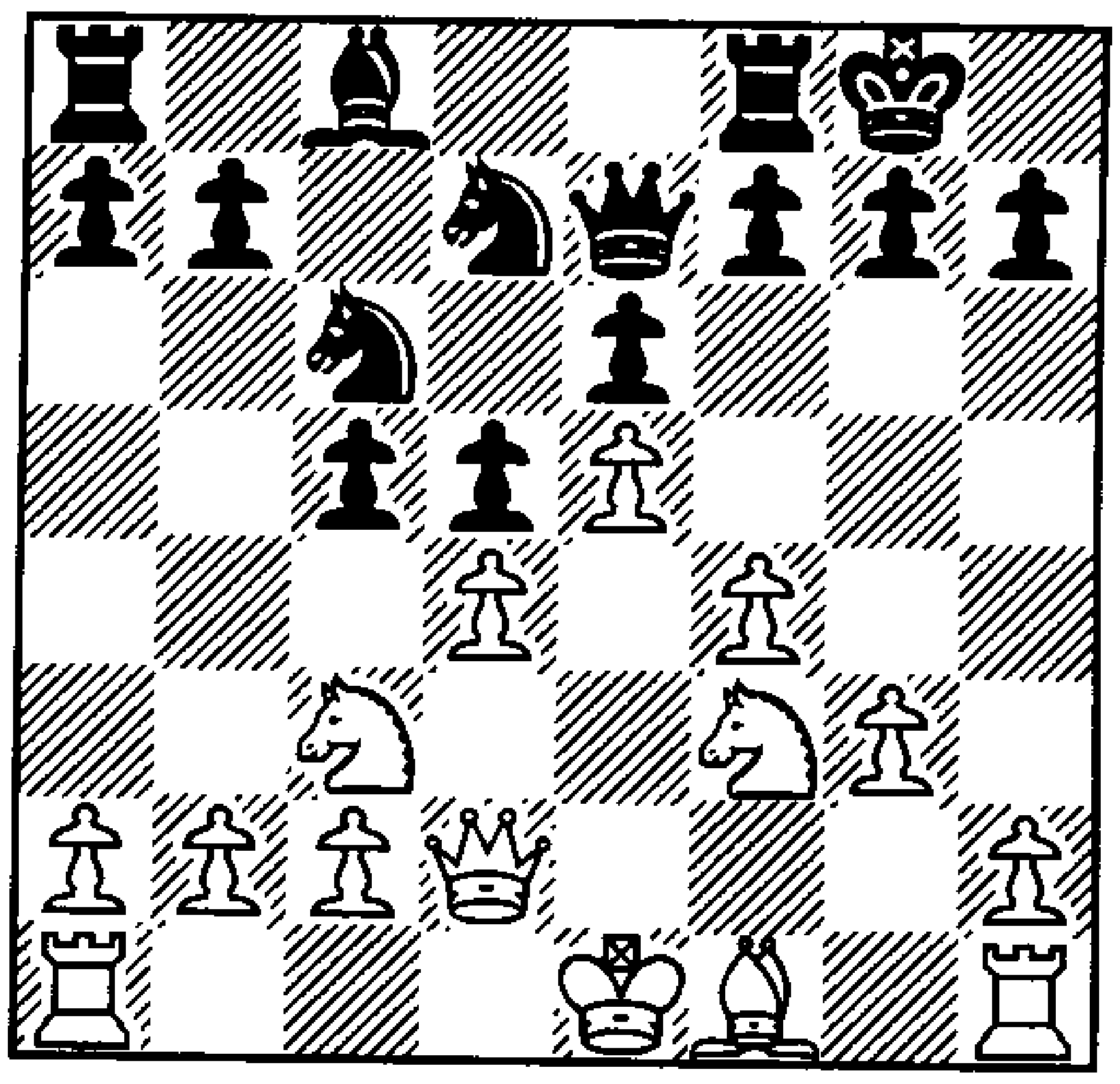
7...0-0

Bad is 7...c5?! 8 ♘b5 0-0?! 9 ♘c7 cxd4 10 ♘xa8 etc.

8 f4 c5

There is no point in losing time on 8...a6 (since here ♘b5 is not a threat): after 9 ♘f3 c5 Steinitz's plan with 10 dxc5 gains in strength.

9 ♘f3 (if 9 ♘b5?!, then 9...a6 10 ♘d6 cxd4 11 ♘f3 f6! is good) **9...♘c6 10 g3**



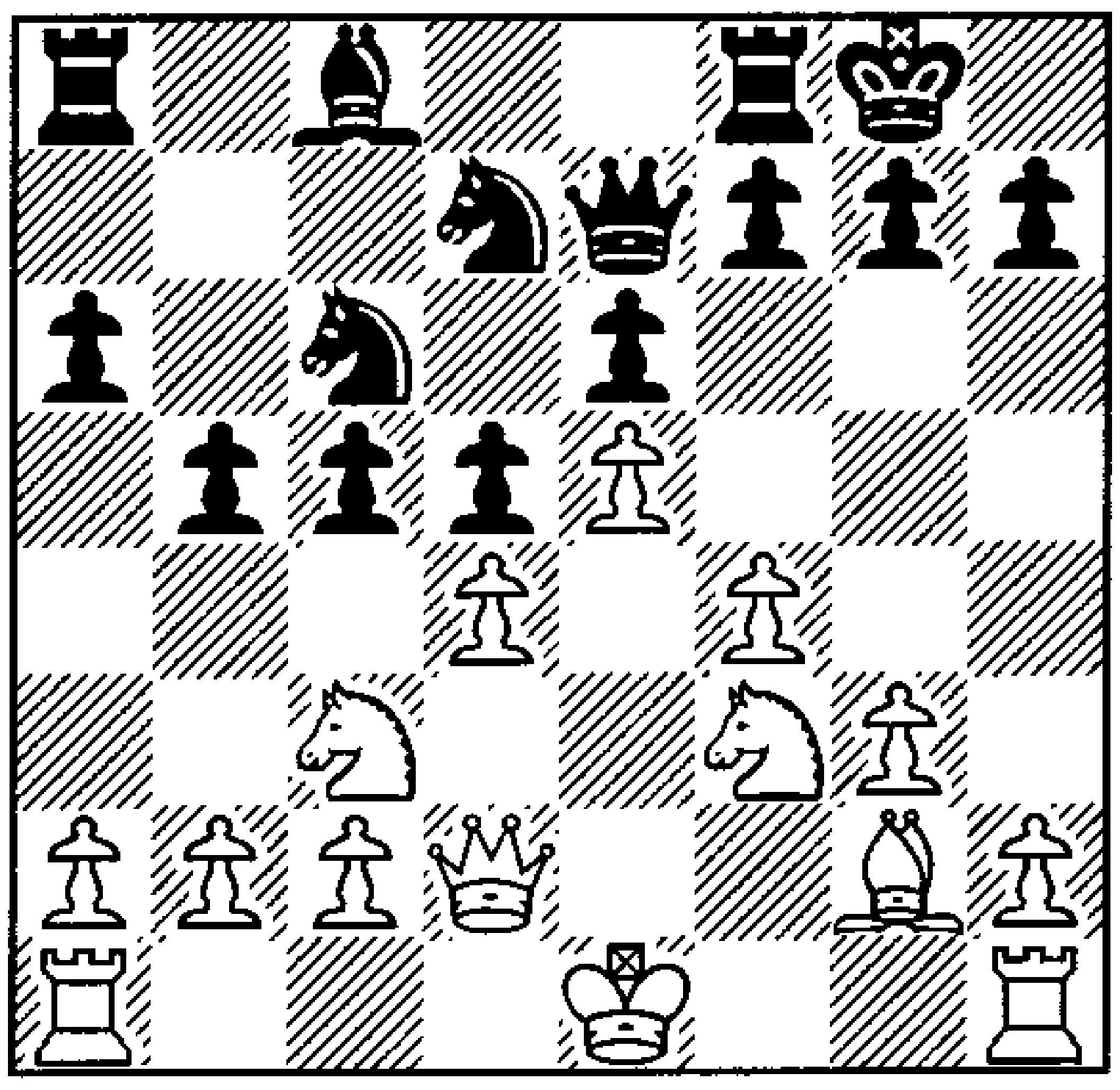
'This move, suggested by Rubinstein, is fully consistent with the entire variation, devised not for an attack on the b1-h7 diagonal, but for weakening Black's centre.' (Tarrasch) 10 0-0-0 ♘b6 11 h4 ♗d7 with equal chances has also been played, but to this day Steinitz's 10 dxc5! remains the main plan.

10...a6

'Black avoids 10...f6, to avoid falling in with his opponent's intentions,' writes Tarrasch, having in mind 11 exf6 ♕xf6 12 0-0-0 a6 13 ♗g2 ♘b6 14 ♖he1 ♘c4 15 ♕f2 b5 16 dxc5!? ♘xb2? 17 ♔xb2 b4 18 ♘d4! bxc3+ 19 ♔a1! with a won game (Rubinstein-Levenfish, Carlsbad 1911). Even so, undermining the centre is in fact the way to call into question White's slow strategy. Firstly, strong is 16...b4 17 ♘a4 ♗d7! (Levenfish), and secondly – 11...♘xf6 12 0-0-0 (12 dxc5 e5!; 12 ♗g2 cxd4 13 ♘xd4 e5!) 12...cxd4 13 ♘xd4 e5! 14 fxe5 ♕xe5 with an excellent game.

11 ♗g2 b5?!

Definitely more appropriate is 11...♘b6! 12 b3 ♗d7 13 ♘e2 cxd4 with equality (Kostic-Maróczy, Bled 1931).



12 0-0!

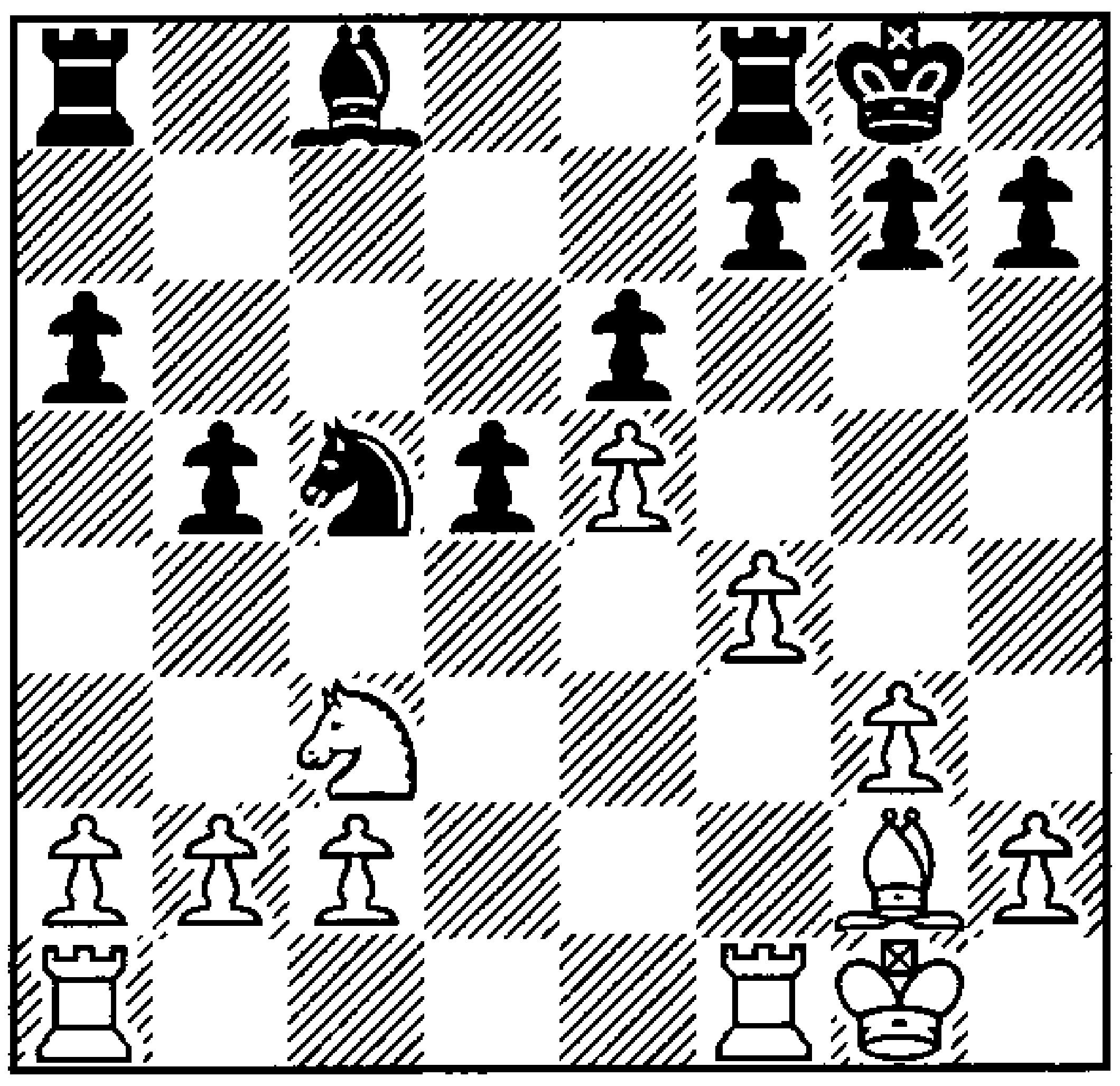
12 0-0-0?! is dangerous in view of 12...c4, then ...♘b6 and ...b5-b4 with an attack.

12...cxd4 13 ♘xd4

A little later Tarrasch tried 13 ♘e2!? against Lowtzky (Breslau 1912) – and correctly: why exchange queens? The game continued 13...♘b6?! (here the knight is cut off; better is 13...♘c5 14 ♘exd4 ♘xd4 15 ♘xd4 ♗b7, aiming for e4 with the knight in the hope of counterplay) 14 b3 ♗d7 15 ♘exd4 ♕c5 16 ♖f2! (after retaining control of d4, the Doctor firmly carries out his classic plan) 16...♖ac8 17 ♘xc6 ♖xc6 18 ♕d4 ♖fc8 19 ♗f1 ♘a8?! 20 a4! bxa4 21 ♖xa4 a5 22 ♕a1! ♕b6 (22...♕e3 23 ♗d3! ♖xc2? 24 ♗xc2 ♖xc2 25 ♕d4 ♕xf2+ 26 ♕xf2 ♖xf2 27 ♖xa5! wins) 23 ♘d4 ♖xc2 (23...♖c5 24 b4!) 24 ♘xc2 ♖xc2 25 ♖d4! and White won. An effective supplement to the duel with Teichmann!

13...♘xd4 14 ♕xd4 ♕c5 15 ♕xc5 ♘xc5

In this position Teichmann offered a draw, but he received a courteous refusal.



16 ♘e2!

'White has more space; Black is cramped not only by the e5-pawn, but also by his own e6-pawn. The white knight will occupy a dominating position at d4, from which it cannot be driven away; for the black knight this is something that cannot be achieved.' (Tarrasch)

16...♗d7 17 ♘d4 ♖ac8 18 ♔f2!

'Although Black controls the only almost open file, as a counter to this White has a significant advantage: he can post in the centre the most important endgame piece – the king, which is something that again Black cannot do.' (Tarrasch)

18...♖c7 19 ♔e3 ♖e8?!

Planless play (apparently Black was afraid of f4-f5). Nowadays in such a position Black would nevertheless gain a draw – by, say, 19...♖fc8 or 19...a5!? (with the idea of ...♖b8 and ...b5-b4) 20 f5 exf5 21 ♗xd5 ♖e8 etc.

20 ♖f2! ♘b7 21 ♗f1

'White must, at last, advantageously deploy his bishop, since at g2 it was dragging out a rather miserable existence.' (Tarrasch)

21...♘a5 22 b3 h6?!

'When there is a lack of good moves, bad ones are made – this is an old truth. Nothing spoils a position so strongly and irreparably as pawn moves.' (Tarrasch) How very true! Of course, Black should have played 22...♘c6 – why give himself an additional weakness?

23 ♗d3

'Now this piece too stands better than its black opposite number. In general, the trio of pieces in the centre is operating splendidly.' (Tarrasch) Complete domination in the centre has been achieved, and from now on White's plan is a breakthrough on the kingside. Up to a certain point he plays very accurately.

23...♘c6 24 ♘xc6! ♗xc6 25 ♔d4

'To the end of the game the king will all the time be ready to invade at c5 and attack the enemy pawns, and so the black rook must constantly guard the c-file.' (Tarrasch)

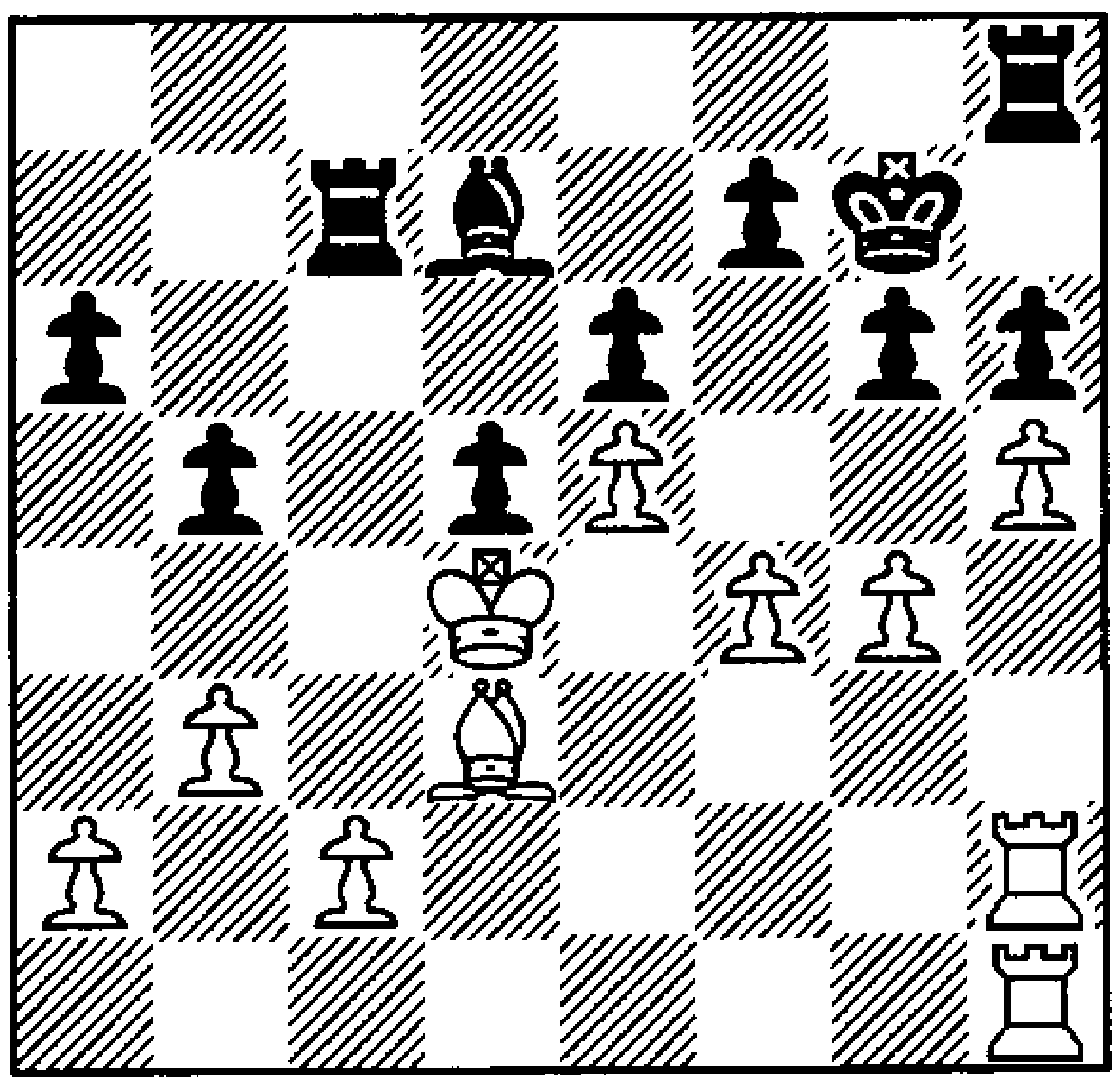
25...♗d7 26 g4!

Disclosing the defectiveness of 22...h6: now White has something to latch on to.

26...♗c8 27 h4 (with the threat of 28 g5 h5 29 g6!) **27...g6 28 ♖h1**

Of course, not 28 g5?! h5!, and Black blocks the kingside.

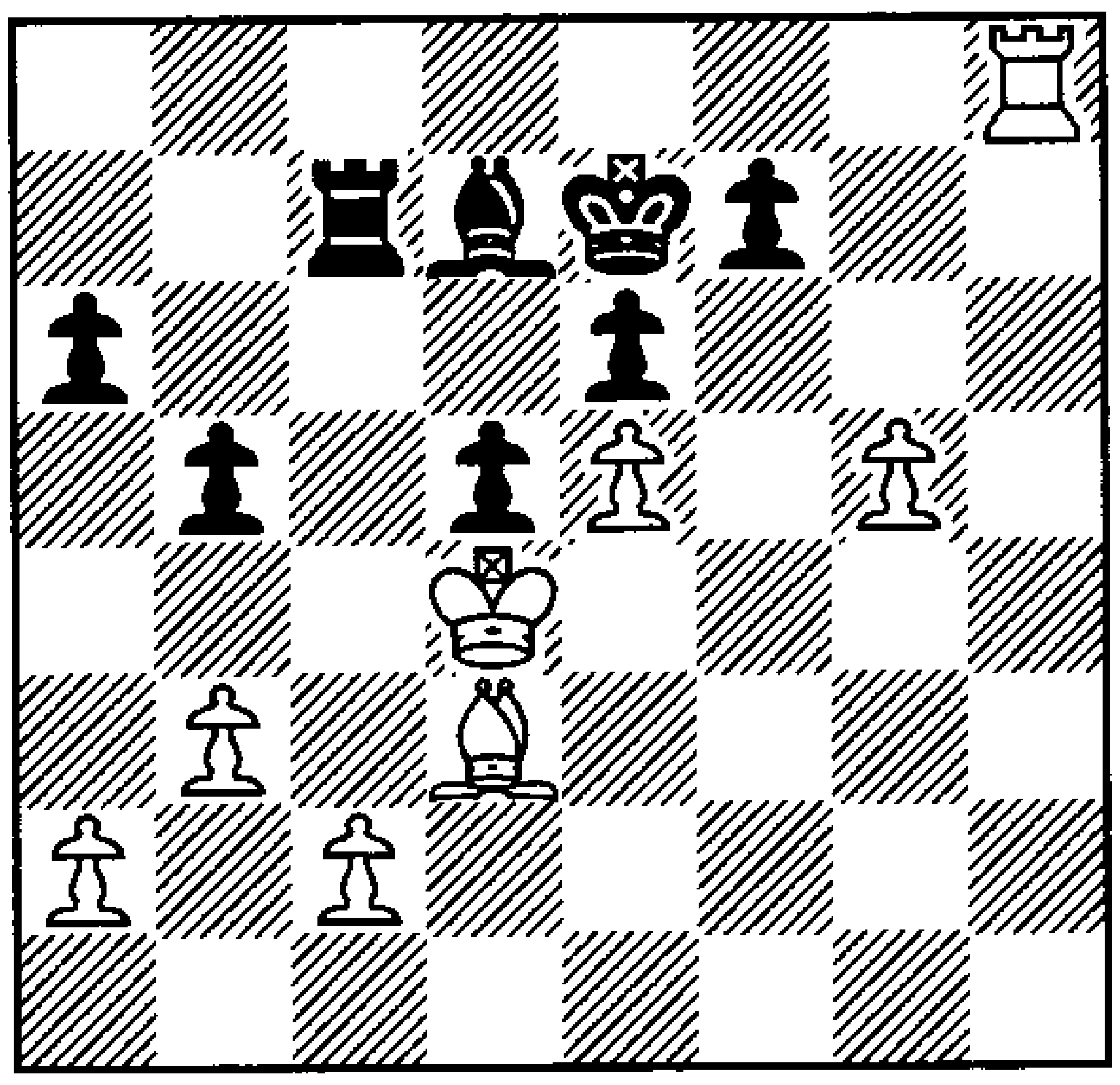
28...♔g7 29 h5 ♖h8 30 ♖fh2 ♗d7



31 g5!

This leads to the inevitable opening of one of the files and the invasion of the rook.

31...hxg5 32 fxg5 ♖xh5 (even worse was 32...♗e8? 33 hxg6 ♖xh2 34 gxf7! and wins) **33 ♖xh5 gxh5 34 ♖xh5 ♔f8 35 ♖h8+ ♔e7**



36 g6?

Unexpectedly White makes a serious mistake. Euwe's move 36 ♖a8?! is also dubious in view of 36...♗c8 37 a4 bxa4 38 bxa4 ♗b7 39 ♖a7 ♔d7 40 c4 (or 40 c3 ♔c8 41 ♗xa6 ♗xa6 42 ♖xa6 ♖c4+) 40...♔c8 41 cxd5 ♔b8 42 d6 ♖c8 with a probable draw.

'The immediate 36 ♖h7! was better,' writes Tarrasch. 'If 36...♔e8, then 37 c3 and ♗e2-h5 with a double attack on the f-pawn. And after 36...♔f8 there would have followed 37 g6 fxg6 38 ♗xg6 ♔g8 39 ♖f7 ♔h8 40 ♗h7! when Black is stalemated. But the immediate g5-g6 also leads to a win.'

Whether or not this is so, we will see shortly, but for the moment let us check Brinkmann's recommendation 39...b4! (instead of 39... ♔h8?): 40 ♗h5! a5 (or 40...♔h8 41 ♗g4! ♔g8 42 ♖xd7! ♖xd7 43 ♗xe6+ ♖f7 44 ♔xd5 and wins) 41 ♗g6 a4 42 ♗h5 a3 (inadequate is 42...♖xc2 43 ♖xd7 a3 44 ♗f7+ ♔f8 45 ♗xe6 ♖xa2 46 ♗xd5 ♖a1 47 e6 ♖d1+ 48 ♔c5 a2 49 ♖f7+ ♔g8 50 ♖a7 a1♕ 51 ♖xa1 ♖xa1 52 e7+) 43 ♗g6 ♔h8 44 ♗h7. Here Neishtadt places the evaluation 'winning advantage', but in my opinion one more move should be made – 44...♖c3! (if 44...♖c6 the computer suggests 45 ♗d3! ♗c8 46 ♖a7 ♔g8 47 ♖a4 winning) and the win is not so obvious:

1) 45 ♖xd7? ♖c7 46 ♖d6 ♔xh7 47 ♖xe6

♖xc2 48 ♔xd5 ♖xa2 49 ♔c5 ♖c2+ 50 ♔xb4 a2 51 ♖a6 ♔g7 52 ♖a7+ (52 ♔b5 ♔f7 53 b4 ♔e7) 52...♔g6 53 e6 (whether or not there is a 'winning advantage' here is unclear) 53...♔f6 54 e7 ♔f7 55 ♔b5 ♔e8 56 b4 ♔f7 57 ♔b6 ♔e8 with a draw – a pretty trick;

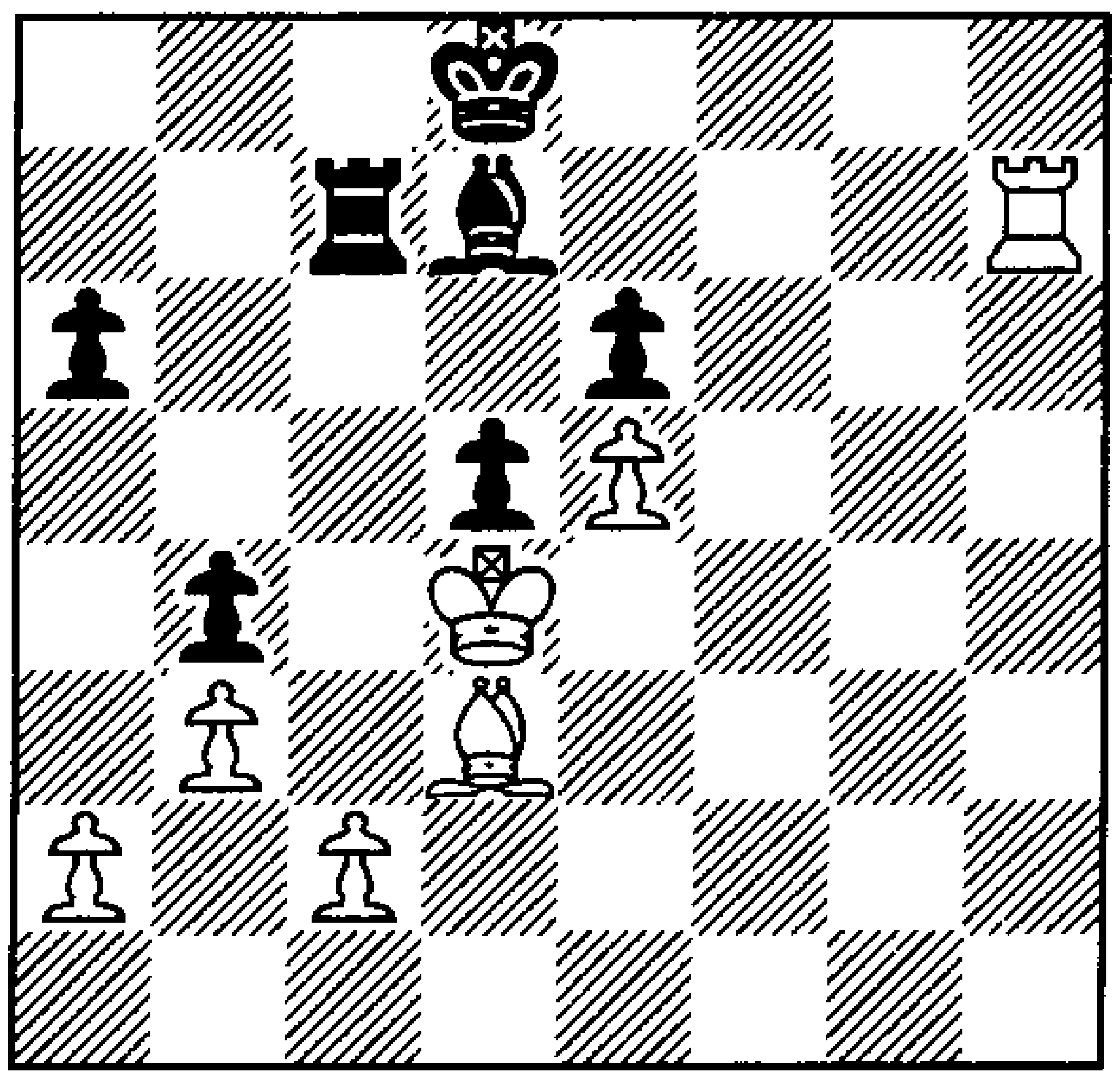
2) 45 ♗d3! (this wins, fortunately) 45...♖c7 46 ♗b5 ♔g8 47 ♖xd7 ♖xc2 48 ♖a7 ♖xa2 49 ♗d7 ♖a1 50 ♗xe6+ ♔f8 51 ♗xd5 a2 52 e6 ♖d1+ 53 ♔c5 a1♕ 54 e7+ ♔e8 55 ♗c6+, and it is all over.

36...fxg6 37 ♗xg6 b4!

Of course, not 37...♗c8? 38 ♖h7+ ♔d8 39 ♖xc7 ♔xc7 40 ♔c5 (at last!) 40...♗d7 41 ♗f7 ♗c8 42 ♗e8 ♗b7 43 b4 ♗c8 (or 43...♗a8 44 ♗f7 ♔d7 45 ♔b6 and wins) 44 ♗c6 ♗d7 (44...♗b7 45 ♗xb7 ♔xb7 46 ♔d6 is also hopeless) 45 ♗xd7 ♔xd7 46 ♔b6 and wins.

38 ♖h7+ ♔d8 39 ♗d3

This is now the last critical point in the game.



39...♖c3?

A blunder. Tarrasch states laconically: '39...♖c6 was better.' But after this I have been unable to find a win: 40 ♖h1 ♔c7 41 a3 bxa3 42 ♖a1 ♔b6 43 ♖xa3 a5, say, is simply a dead draw, a fortress! Which means that, as often happens, at the very last moment Teichmann missed an unexpected saving chance...

40 a3! a5 41 ♖h8+ ♔e7 1-0 (or 41...♔c7 42 ♖a8 ♔b6 43 ♖a6+)

Here, without waiting for 42 ♖a8, Black resigned.

In the fifth round of the preliminary part of the super-tournament in St Petersburg (1914), Tarrasch, in the words of one historian, 'played a game, the finish of which is known by any player who has the slightest experience: the innovator Nimzowitsch suffered badly at the hands of the classic.' Moreover, in a Tarrasch Defence!

Game 51

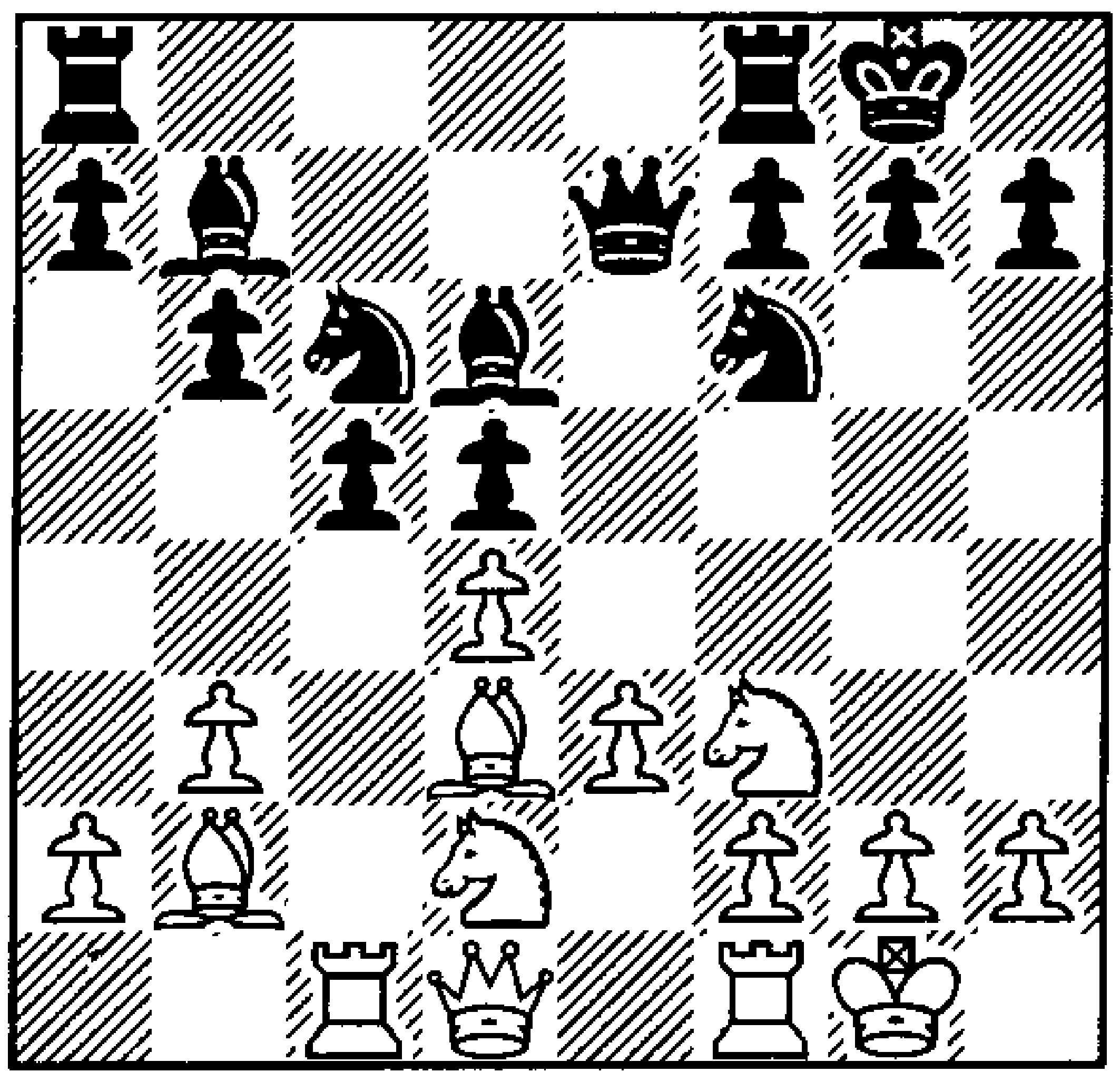
A.Nimzowitsch-S.Tarrasch

St Petersburg 1914,
preliminary tournament
Queen's Gambit D30

1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 c5 3 c4 e6 4 e3 (4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♘c3 ♘c6 6 g3 is stronger – *Game No.64*) **4...♘f6 5 ♗d3 ♘c6 6 0-0 ♗d6**

Also good, in the spirit of the Queen's Gambit Accepted, was 6...dxc4 7 ♗xc4 a6 (Janowski-Lasker, Berlin 4th matchgame 1910), but Tarrasch was happier playing these positions as White.

7 b3 0-0 8 ♗b2 b6 9 ♘bd2 ♗b7 10 ♖c1 (10 ♘e5!?) **10...♕e7 11 cxd5 exd5**

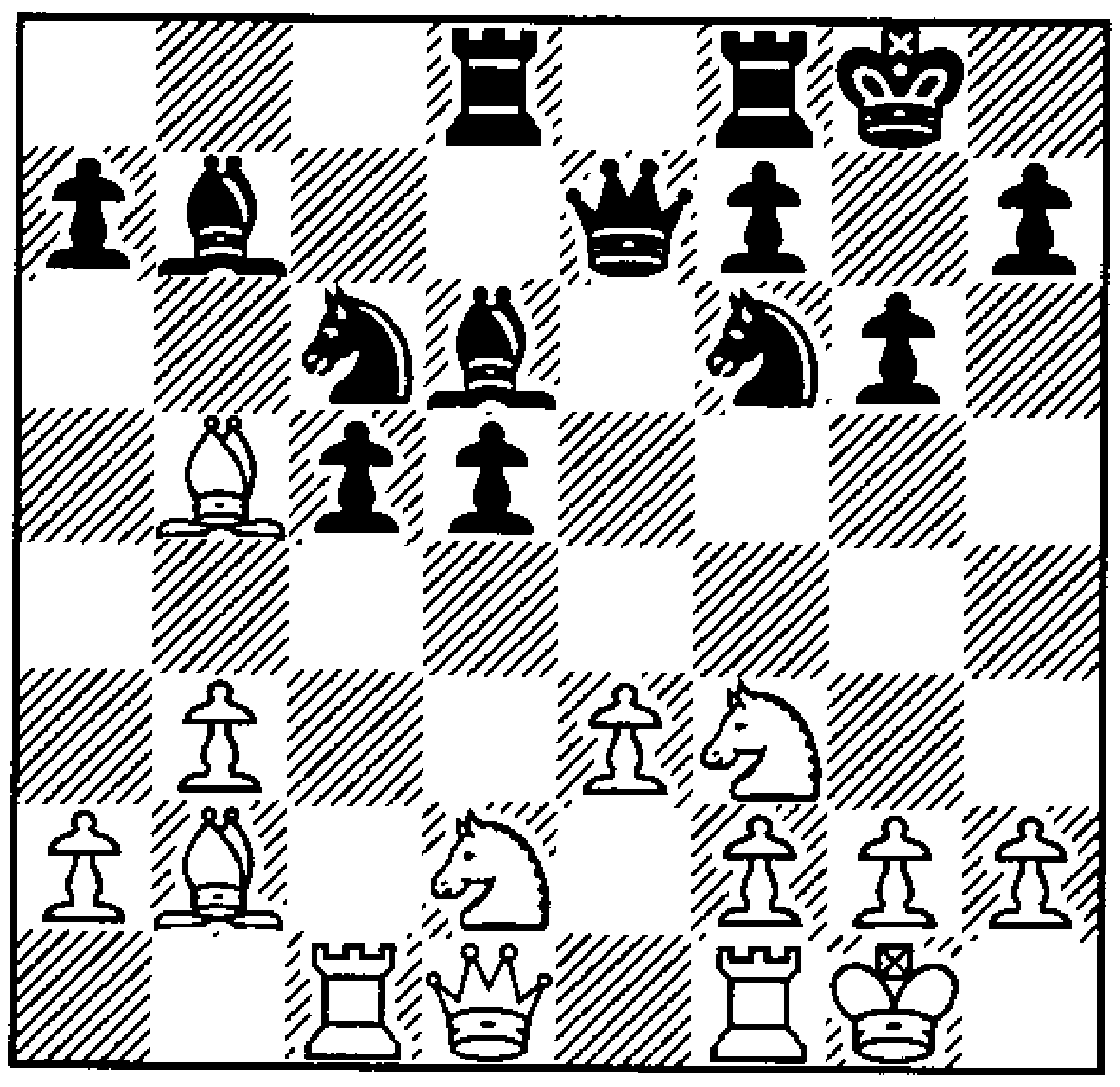


12 ♘h4 g6 13 ♘hf3 ♖ad8

The typical 13...♘e4?! is premature in view of 14 dxc5! bxc5? 15 ♗xe4 dxe4 16 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 17 ♕xd6 and wins.

14 dxc5?! bxc5 15 ♗b5?!

Nimzowitsch handles this classical variation passively and unsuccessfully, feeling much less confident in it that in 'his' modernistic variations. There was nowhere for him to employ his imagination, and it was possibly games such as this one that made him think that in chess one should play differently...



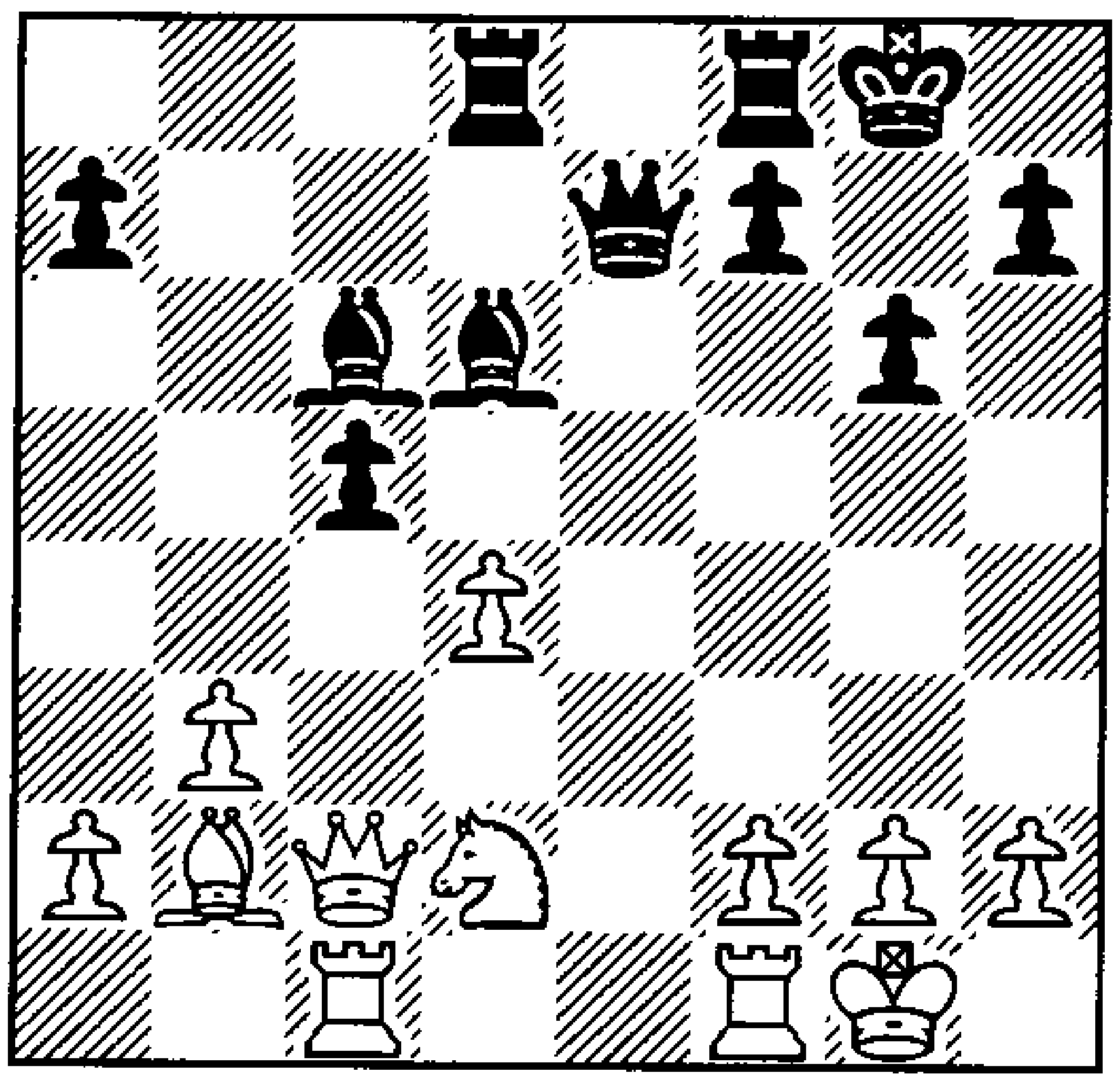
15...♘e4 16 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 17 ♕c2 (if 17 b4 there is 17...♗b5!) **17...♘xd2!** (to divert the knight from f3) **18 ♘xd2**

'Also after the better 18 ♕xd2 Black has fine attacking chances.' (Euwe)

18...d4!

A classic breakthrough. Of numerous similar instances, the first that come to mind are the games Spassky-Tal (Montreal 1979), Korchnoi-Karpov (Merano 1st matchgame 1981) and, with reversed colours, Kasparov-Portisch (Niksic 1983).

19 exd4?



The decisive mistake. White should have reconciled himself to an inferior game after 19 e4 ♖fe8 or 19 ♖fe1 ♖fe8 20 ♘c4 ♗c7.

19...♗xh2+!?

Tarrasch is captivated by the famous game Lasker-Bauer (*Game No.36*): of course, he could not resist the temptation to win in classical fashion, with the sacrifice of both bishops! Although he could have achieved his goal more quickly with 19...♗xg2! 20 ♔xg2 (20 dxc5 ♕g5!) 20...♕g5+, when the white army is unable to come to the aid of its king: 21 ♔h1 (21 ♔h3 ♕h5+) 21...♕f4 22 ♔g2 ♕xh2+ 23 ♔f3 ♖fe8 24 ♘e4 ♕f4+ 25 ♔g2 ♖xe4, or 21 ♔f3 ♖fe8! (the strongest) 22 ♖g1 ♕f4+ 23 ♔g2 ♖e2 and wins.

20 ♔xh2 ♕h4+ 21 ♔g1 ♗xg2! 22 f3!

White would have lost easily after 22 ♔xg2? ♕g4+ 23 ♔h1 ♖d5! 24 ♕xc5 ♖h5+ 25 ♕xh5 ♕xh5+ 26 ♔g2 ♕g5+ 27 ♔h2 ♕xd2.

22...♖fe8! (but not 22...♕g3? because of 23 ♘e4) **23 ♘e4**

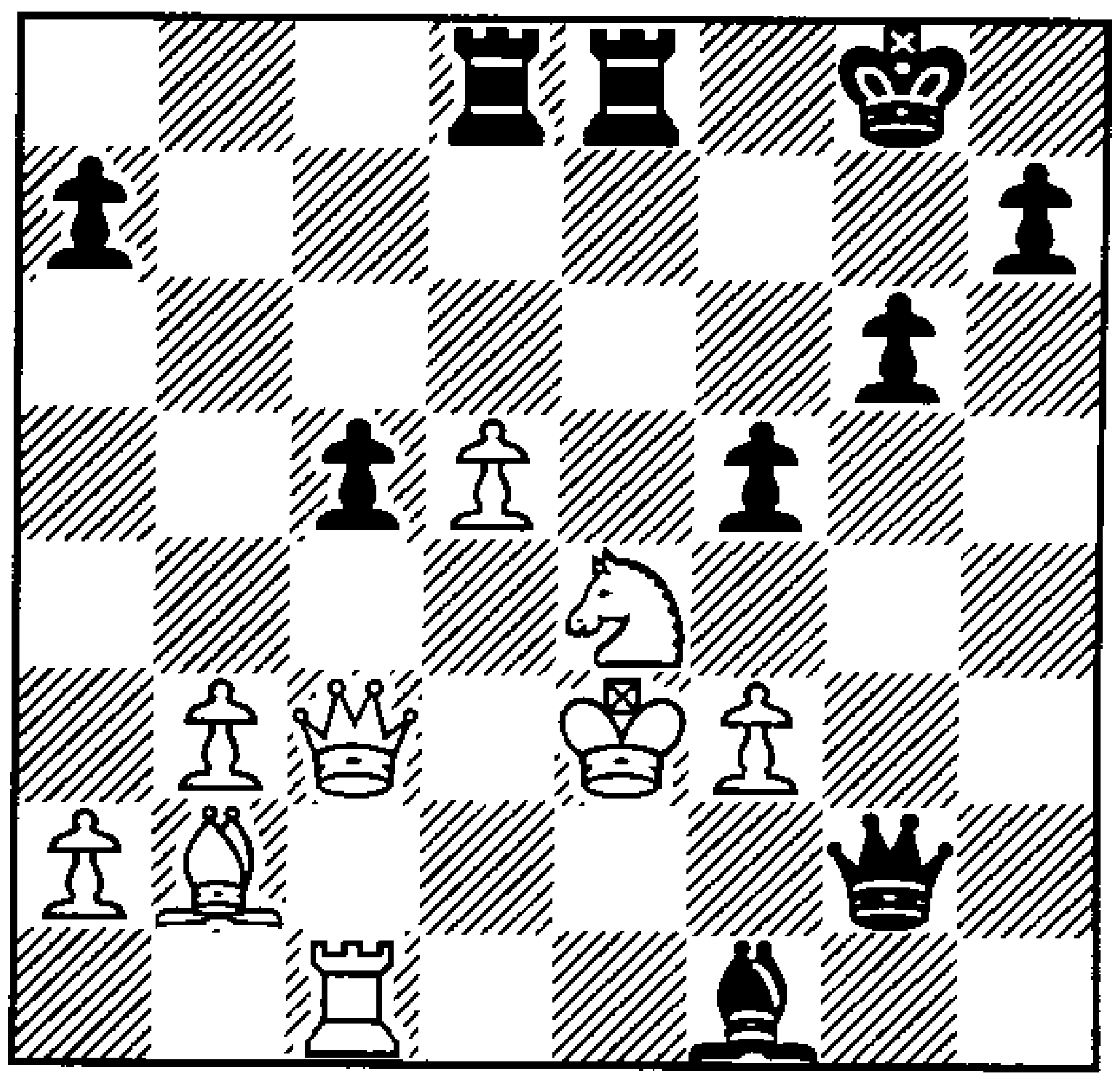
No better was 23 ♖fe1 (23 ♔xg2? ♖e2+) 23...♖xe1+ 24 ♖xe1 ♕xe1+ 25 ♔xg2 ♕e2+ 26 ♔g3 in view of 26...♖d5! 27 f4 ♖h5 and wins.

23...♕h1+ 24 ♔f2 ♗xf1 25 d5

A desperate attempt to create counter-threats along the a1-h8 diagonal. The bishop cannot be taken: 25 ♖xf1? ♕h2+ and 26...♕xc2.

25...f5! 26 ♕c3 (or 26 ♘f6+ ♔f7 27 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 winning) **26...♕g2+ 27 ♔e3**

But not 27 ♔e1? ♕e2 mate.



27...♖xe4+!

A spectacular concluding sacrifice. Here the Doctor no doubt remembered one of his immortal aphorisms: 'Chess, like love and music, has the ability to make man happy.'

28 fxe4 f4+!?

Much more elegant than the 'crude' 28...♕g3+! 29 ♔d2 ♕f2+ 30 ♔d1 ♕e2 mate.

29 ♔xf4 ♖f8+ 30 ♔e5 (30 ♔e3 ♖f3 mate) **30...♕h2+ 31 ♔e6 ♖e8+ 32 ♔d7** (32 ♔f6 ♕f4 mate) **32...♗b5 mate**

A splendid win, which conceded the special prize 'for brilliancy' to the game Capablanca-Bernstein (*Game No.83*) only because the combination that occurred here had a 'predecessor'. But in my opinion, this game was better!

As we see, the 'positional dogmatist' Tarrasch did not shun combinations. Also after the war the old Doctor sometimes experimented, employing new, risky variations. Thus in Mährisch-Ostrau (1923) against Lasker he chose... the Alekhine Defence! It was also there that the following highly instructive game was played.

Game 52

R.Spielmann-S.Tarrasch

Mährisch-Ostrau 1923

King's Gambit C32

1 e4 e5 2 f4

It will be recalled that Spielmann was a fervent chess neo-romantic, a follower of Anderssen and Chigorin 'the last knight of the King's Gambit'. And to make a better appraisal of the critical nature of this encounter, take a look at what he wrote about his opponent:

'Hardly had the direct attacking style given way to the positional, when Tarrasch appeared with his advocacy of the "new principles" of play. If these principles are followed in the games of Tarrasch himself, it becomes clear that in them there is no spirit of attack. Slowly, terribly slowly, almost stealthily, the chess forces move into play. Their motto is to avoid, as far as possible, an open battle and merely to besiege the opponent, blockade, and wait until his vital resources are exhausted, until his "air and water" run out, and then slowly crush him. For a long time this Tarrasch method has been extremely successful. His opponents either lost patience and bled to death in untimely sallies, or remained passive and were subjected to an absolute squeeze.'

2...d5 3 exd5 e4

Falkbeer's classical counter-gambit – as played long before by Morphy!

4 d3

This would appear to be more promising than the alternative variation 4 ♘c3 ♘f6 5 d3 ♗b4, as in the game Schulten-Morphy (*Game No.7*).

4...♘f6 (4...♕xd5 5 ♕e2 etc.) **5 dxe4!?**

Berger's plan, known from back in the late 1860s.

5...♘xe4 6 ♘f3

Later, in 1941, Keres introduced 6 ♗e3!? For example: 6...♗d6 7 ♘f3 0-0 (Bronstein-Unzicker, Moscow Olympiad 1956) 8 ♗d3! ♖e8 9 0-0 ♘f6 10 ♘e5 ♘bd7 11 ♘c4 ♘f8 12 ♔h1! with the initiative (Muchnik), 6...♗c5 7 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 8 ♕e2+ ♕e7 9 ♘c3 ♗g4 10 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 11 h3 ♗f5 12 0-0-0 h5 13 ♘f3 with a clear advantage for White (Spassky-Limbos, Varna Olympiad 1962), or 6...♕h4+ 7 g3 ♘xg3 8 ♘f3 (8 hxg3?! ♕xh1 9 ♕e2, as played by Keres and Tal, is more reckless) 8...♕e7 9 hxg3 ♕xe3+ 10 ♕e2 ♕xe2+ 11 ♗xe2 ♗g4 12 ♘c3 ♗b4 13 ♘g5 with slightly the better ending (Spassky-Matanovic, Belgrade 1964).

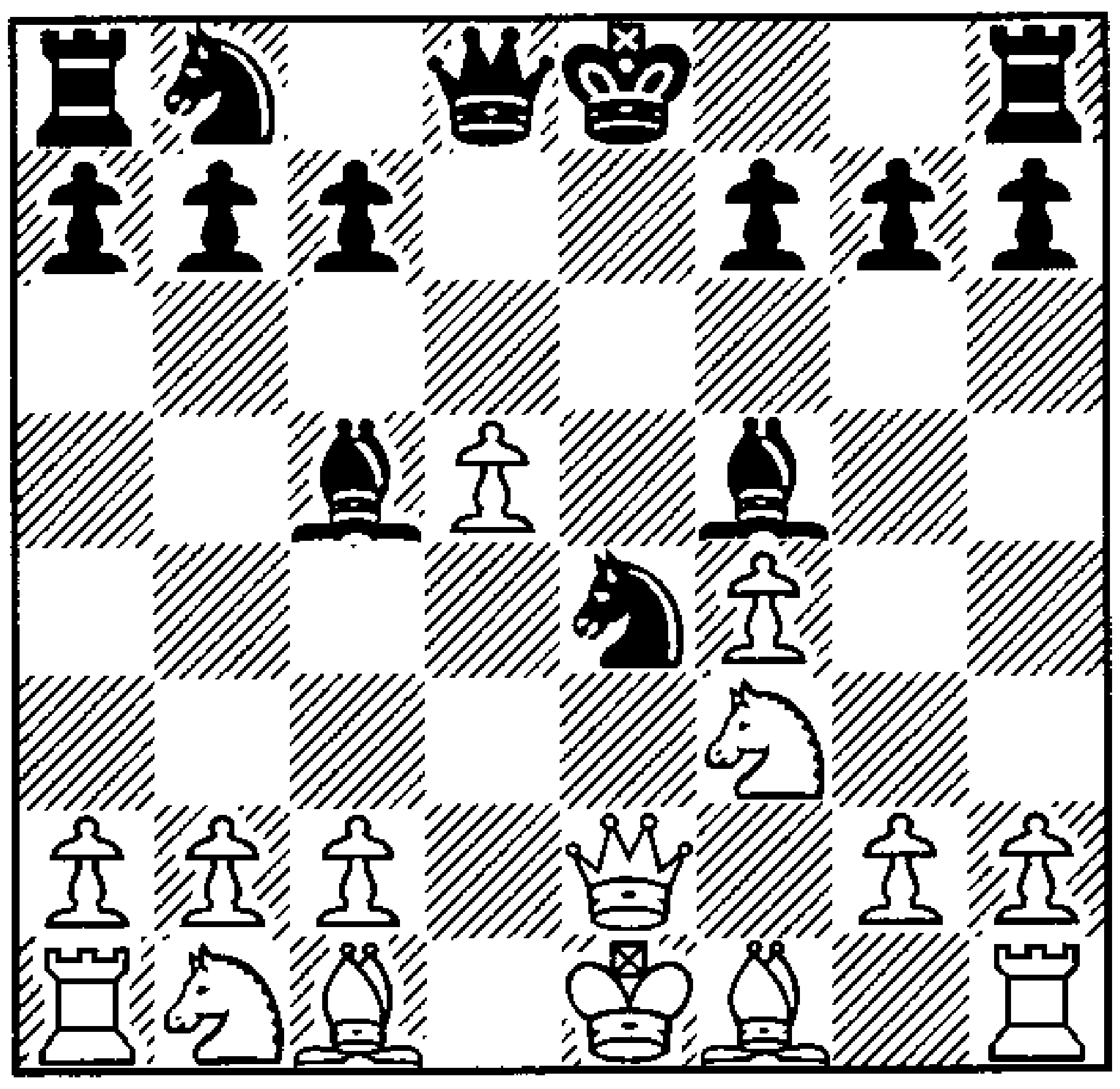
6...♗c5!

Of course, not 6...♗f5? 7 ♗e3! c6 8 ♗c4 b5 9 ♗b3 c5 10 d6! c4 11 ♕d5 with an obvious advantage to White (Alekhine-Tarrasch, St Petersburg 1914). On this occasion the Doctor had prepared a surprise...

7 ♕e2 (7 ♗d3!? is a suggestion of Tartakower) **7...♗f5!**

An important improvement in the main position of the variation! Earlier White had been successful after 7...f5 (7...♕xd5 8 ♘fd2!;

7...♕e7 8 ♗e3!; 7...0-0 8 ♕xe4 ♖e8 9 ♘e5 f6 10 ♗b5! Krause) 8 ♗e3! ♕xd5 9 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 10 ♘c3 ♕e7 11 ♘d5 (Spielmann-Wolf, Düsseldorf 1908), or 7...♗f2+ 8 ♔d1 ♕xd5+ 9 ♘fd2! f5 10 ♘c3 ♕d4 11 ♘cxe4 fxe4 12 c3 (Réti-Breyer, Budapest 1917).



8 g4?

The intriguing point is that this thrust had been recommended by Spielmann in the latest edition of Bilguer's *Handbuch* as the refutation of 7...♗f5. But here Tarrasch had devised something!

Of course, correct is 8 ♘c3 ♕e7 9 ♗e3!, as Tartakower soon announced in his famous theoretical work *Die hypermoderne Schachpartie* and his no less famous article *From the sickbed of the King's Gambit*.

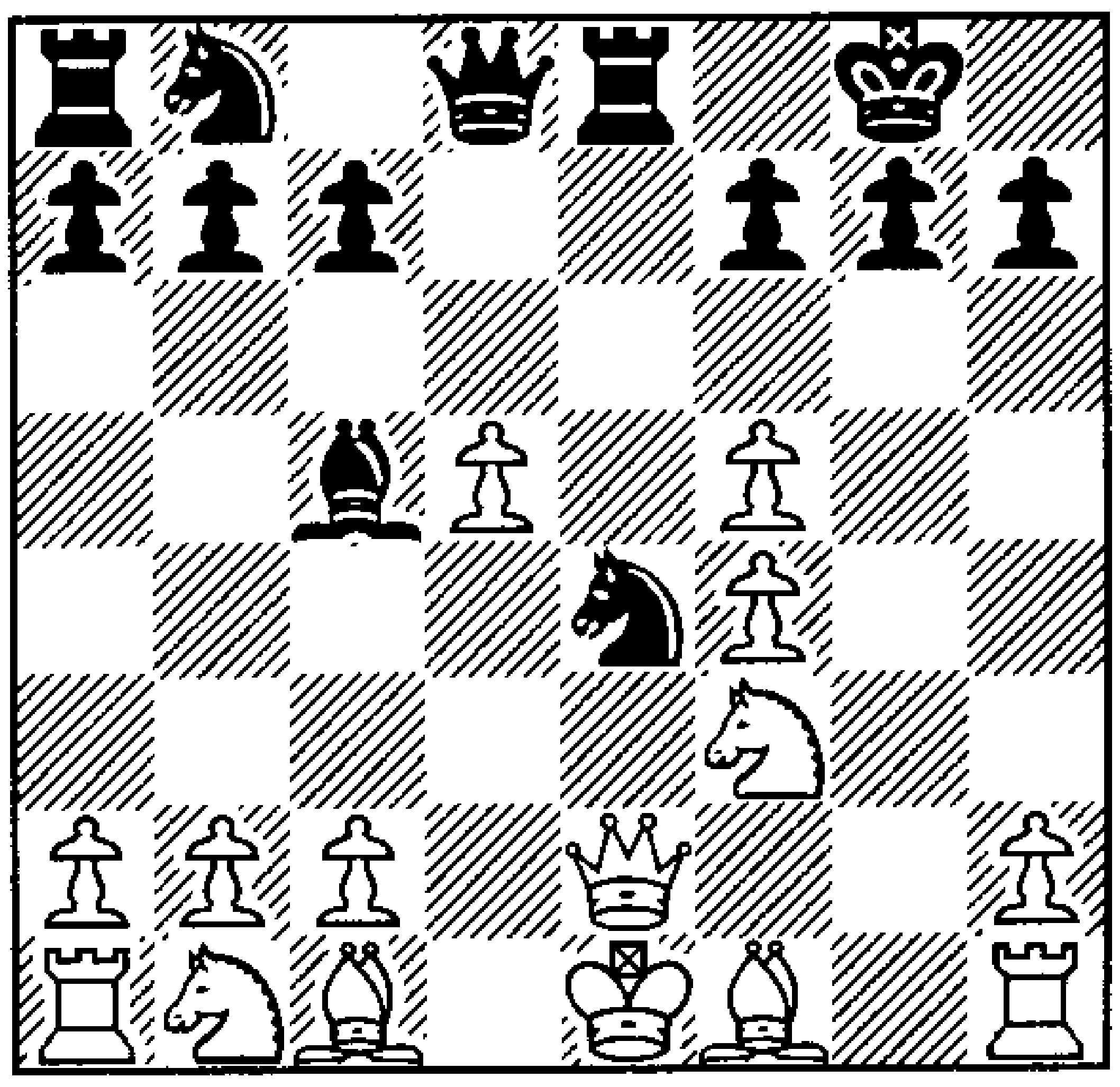
1) 9...♘xc3 10 ♗xc5 ♘xe2 11 ♗xe7 ♘xf4 12 ♗a3!! with advantage to White, which was converted in the game Bronstein-Tal (Riga 1958) – cf. Bronstein's remarkable book *200 Open Games*.

2) 9...♗xe3 10 ♕xe3 ♘xc3 11 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 12 bxc3 ♗xc2 13 ♔d2 ♗g6 14 ♖e1+ ♔d6 15 ♘d4! with the better endgame. Therefore Tartakower recommended the 'equalising' 12...♗e4, and only nearly half a century later was it discovered that 13 ♘g5! ♗xd5 14 0-0-0 sets Black difficult problems.

8...0-0!!

A brilliant bishop sacrifice, which must have stunned Spielmann.

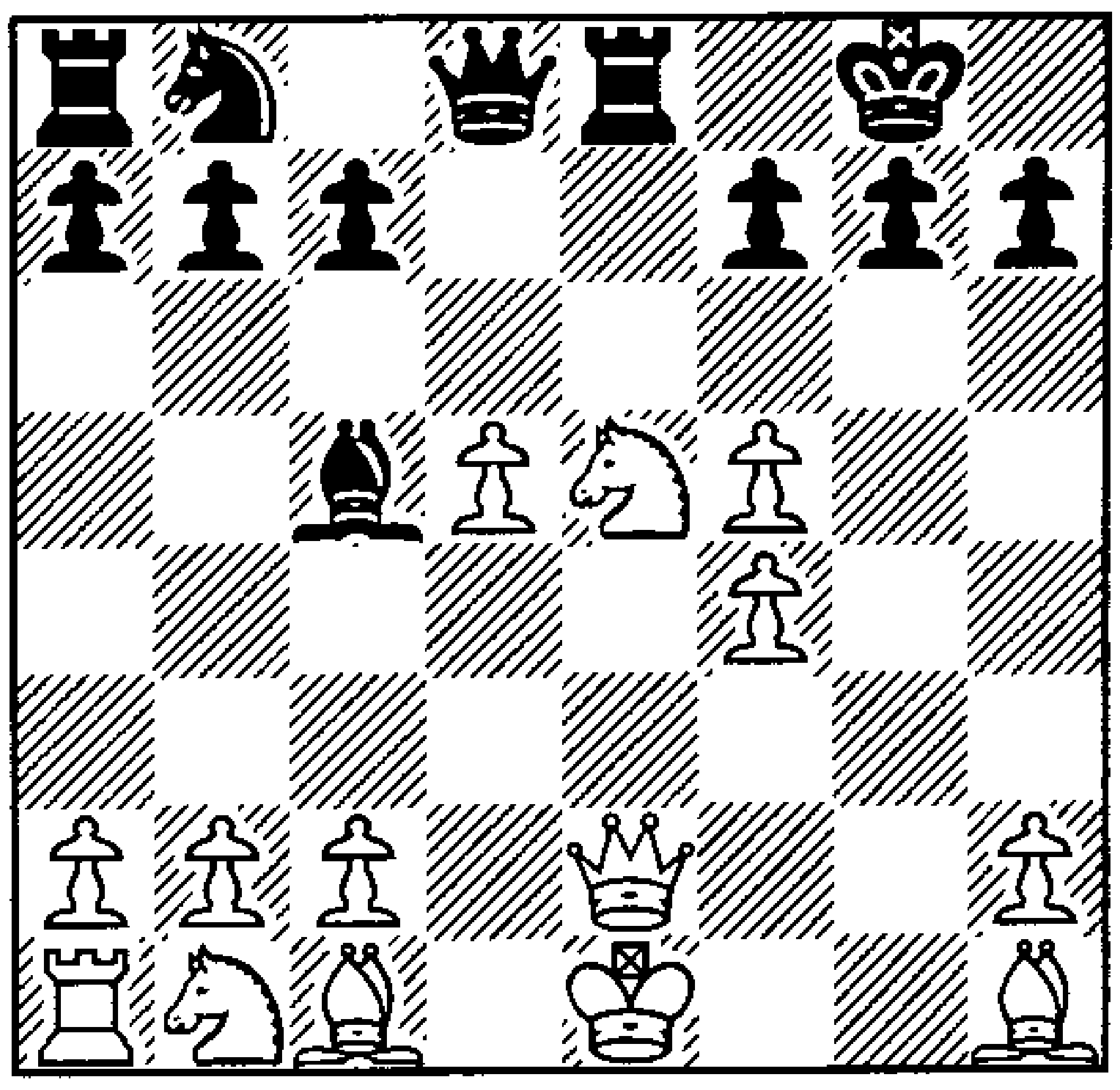
9 gxf5 ♖e8



10 ♗g2

10 ♕g2 comes into consideration (but not 10 ♘e5? ♕h4+). After this the loser and other commentators give the line 10...♕xd5 11 ♗e2 ♘c6 12 ♘c3 (*? – G. K.*) 12...♕xf5 with numerous threats. However, in my opinion it is stronger to interpose 12 f6! and only after 12...g6 or 12...♘xf6 to play 13 ♘c3, when Black still has to demonstrate that his attack compensates for the piece deficit. Instead of 10...♕xd5 possibly better is 10...♘g3+ 11 ♘e5 ♘xh1 12 ♕xh1 f6 13 d6 ♗xd6 14 ♗c4+ ♔h8, nevertheless with advantage to Black.

10...♘f2 11 ♘e5 ♘xh1 12 ♗xh1



12...♘d7!

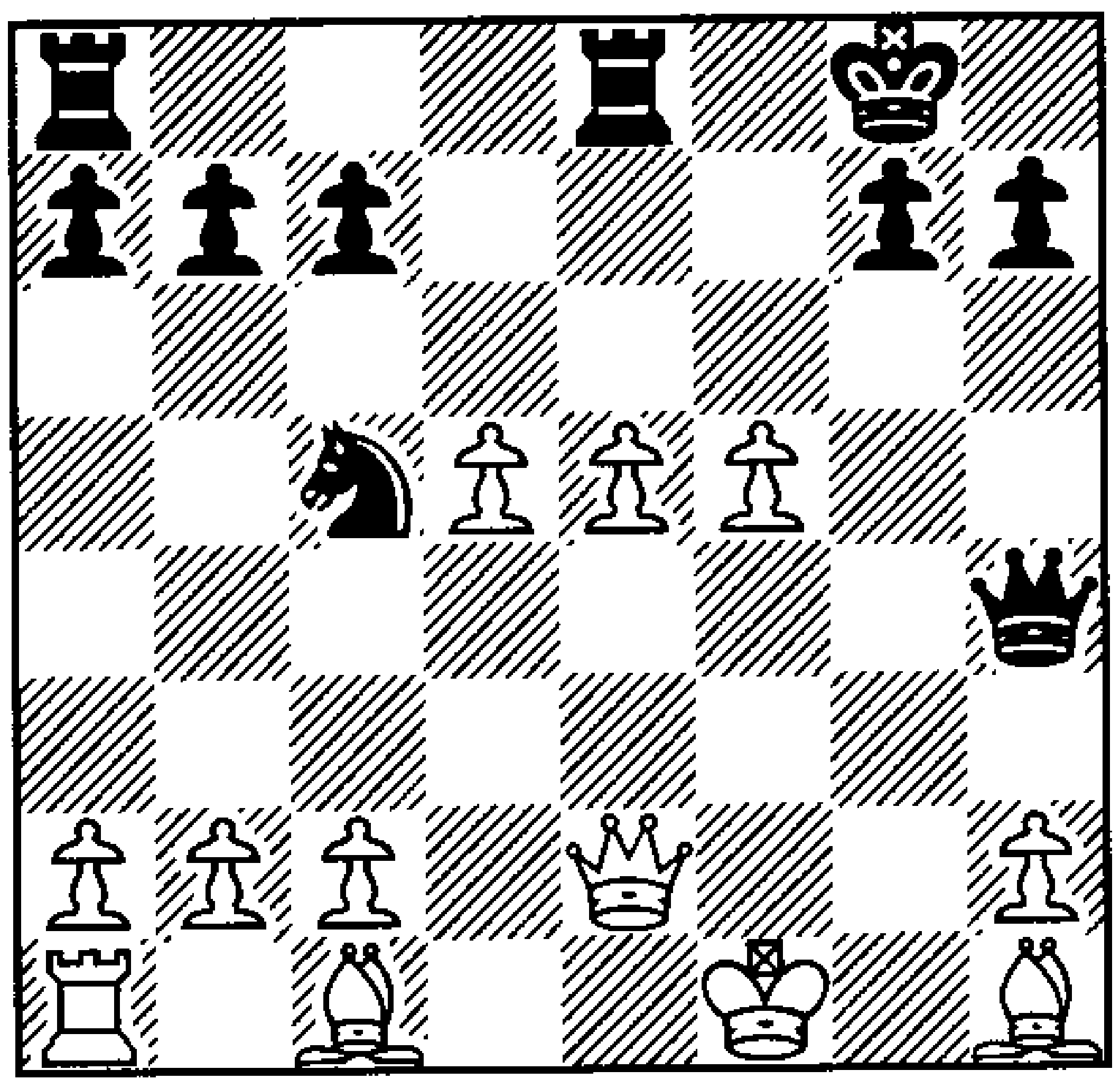
A brilliant move: things immediately become bad for White! 12...f6? was premature on account of 13 d6! fxe5 (13...cxd6? 14 ♗d5+) 14 ♕c4+ ♔h8 15 ♕xc5 ♘c6 16 ♕f2 ♕xd6 17 ♘c3, when Black stands badly.

13 ♘c3 f6! 14 ♘e4

It is hard to say whether it would have been more tenacious to play 14 ♗d2 fxe5 15 0-0-0 exf4 16 ♕c4 ♗d6, when Black is the exchange up.

14...fxe5 15 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 16 fxe5 ♕h4+ 17 ♔f1

17 ♔d1? ♕d4+ was even worse, but now too the days of the white king are numbered.



17...♖f8! 18 ♔g1?!

White would also have lost after 18 ♕f3 ♕xh2 19 ♗f4 ♕xc2 20 f6 ♘d3 21 ♕g3 ♖f7, or 18 f6 ♖ae8! 19 e6 (19 ♗g2 ♕d4!) 19...♖xf6+ 20 ♔g1 ♕d4+ 21 ♗e3 ♖g6+ 22 ♗g2 ♕xd5, but it was worth trying 18 e6! ♖xf5+ 19 ♔g1 ♖af8 (19...♕d4+ 20 ♗e3 ♕xb2 21 ♖e1 ♕c3 22 ♗d2 is not so clear) 20 ♗e3 ♘e4 21 ♗g2 – here there is still some fight in the position.

18...♕d4+! 19 ♗e3 ♕xe5 20 ♖e1 ♘d7!

As quickly as possible to the kingside!

21 ♕c4 ♔h8 22 ♗e4 ♖ae8 23 ♗d4 ♕f4 24 ♖e2 ♘f6

But not 24...♖xe4? 25 ♖xe4 ♕xe4?? 26 ♗xg7+ and 27 ♕xe4.

25 ♗xf6 gxf6 26 h3 (or 26 ♖e1 ♖g8+ 27 ♔h1 ♕f3+!) **26...♖g8+ 0-1**

A very complicated game, conducted with genuine inspiration by Tarrasch. And yet he was already in his 62nd year, and within five years he was to give up playing...

But in general Tarrasch preferred classical methods and he was undoubtedly a player with the class and talent of a champion. But he had his purely competitive problems (as, for instance, did Chigorin, who was unable to withstand the tension of the struggle). At decisive moments of chess history – in particular in the 1890s, when he needed to demonstrate everything of which he was capable, Tarrasch often avoided a direct confrontation with his strongest opponents, preferring not to subject his nervous system to excessive strain.

It is probable that at that time he could have defeated both Steinitz, and also even Lasker – or at least to offer him very serious resistance. But in the 20th century Lasker was already too strong for Tarrasch: the champion had retained his enormous practical strength, whereas the challenger had begun to lose his, together with his former clarity of thought...

Test of Principles

In 1908 the German Chess Union finally managed to raise the funds for the long-awaited match for the world crown between Lasker and Tarrasch, and on 17th August in Düsseldorf, before a crowd of nearly two thousand spectators, the two players joined battle. They played to the first to win eight games; the time control was one hour for each 15 moves with an adjournment after six hours' play; the prize fund – 6,500 Marks (4,000 to the winner and 2,500 to the loser) plus an appearance fee for the champion of 7,500 Marks.

The match with Tarrasch was a severe test of Lasker's creative views. His opponent was a strict guardian of Steinitz's laws, so strict that later Tarrasch's critics unfairly called him 'dogmatic'. In fact Tarrasch, an advocate of the positional school (although, as we have seen, he also had a brilliant combinative talent), a splendid theoretician, commentator and writer, made an invaluable contribution to the development of chess. At the board he firmly upheld his principles: his ideal was play 'according to the position', the search for objectively the strongest move. Whereas Lasker's ideal was the move that was most unpleasant for the given opponent!

Initially the match promised to be competitively intriguing: Lasker won the first, in the Exchange Variation of the Ruy Lopez, and also the second, then Tarrasch responded with a spectacular win in the third. 'After two days' rest he played freshly, not displaying any psychological damage from his initial defeats.' (Lasker)

Game 53

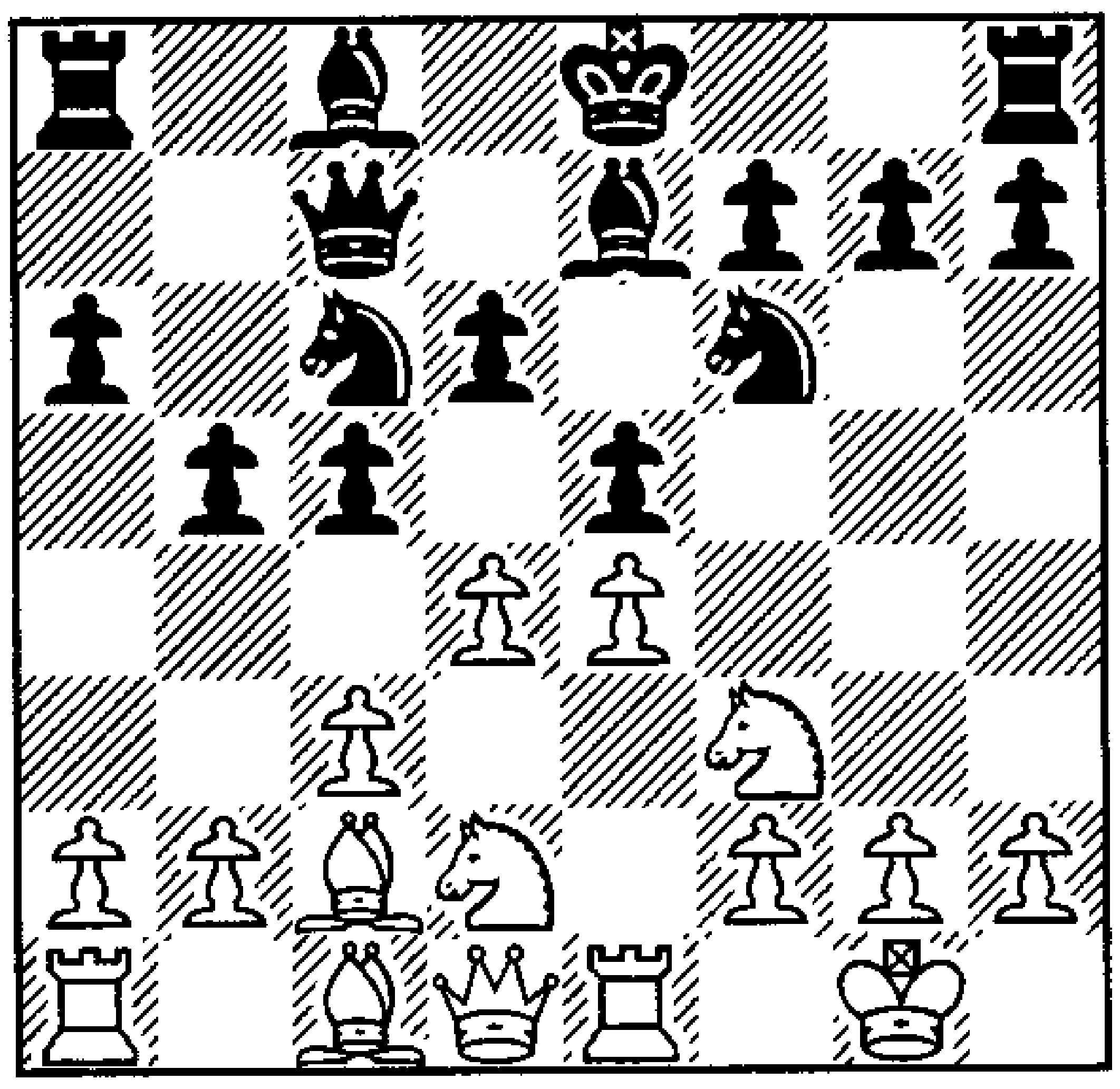
Em.Lasker-S.Tarrasch

World Championship Match,
Düsseldorf/Munich 1908, third game
Ruy Lopez C98

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 ♘a5?!

8...0-0 9 h3 ♘a5 10 ♗c2 c5 11 d4 ♕c7 is more accurate, but at that time after 8...0-0 they feared 9 d4, not knowing that 9...♗g4 gives Black good counterplay.

9 ♗c2 c5 10 d4 ♕c7 11 ♘bd2 ♘c6



12 h3

A non-essential move, which returns us to a theoretical position. 12 ♘f1?! (*Game No.78*) is passive, but White could have played 12 d5, 12 a4 or 12 dxc5, trying to carry out Rauzer's plan with an extra tempo.

12...0-0 13 ♘f1?!

A dubious decision: now Black can simply grab a pawn. The Rauzer system really is better – 13 dxc5 dxc5 14 ♘f1 (14 a4!?) and ♘e3. This is what Fischer played, although with alternating success: thus he lost to Kholmov (Havana 1965).

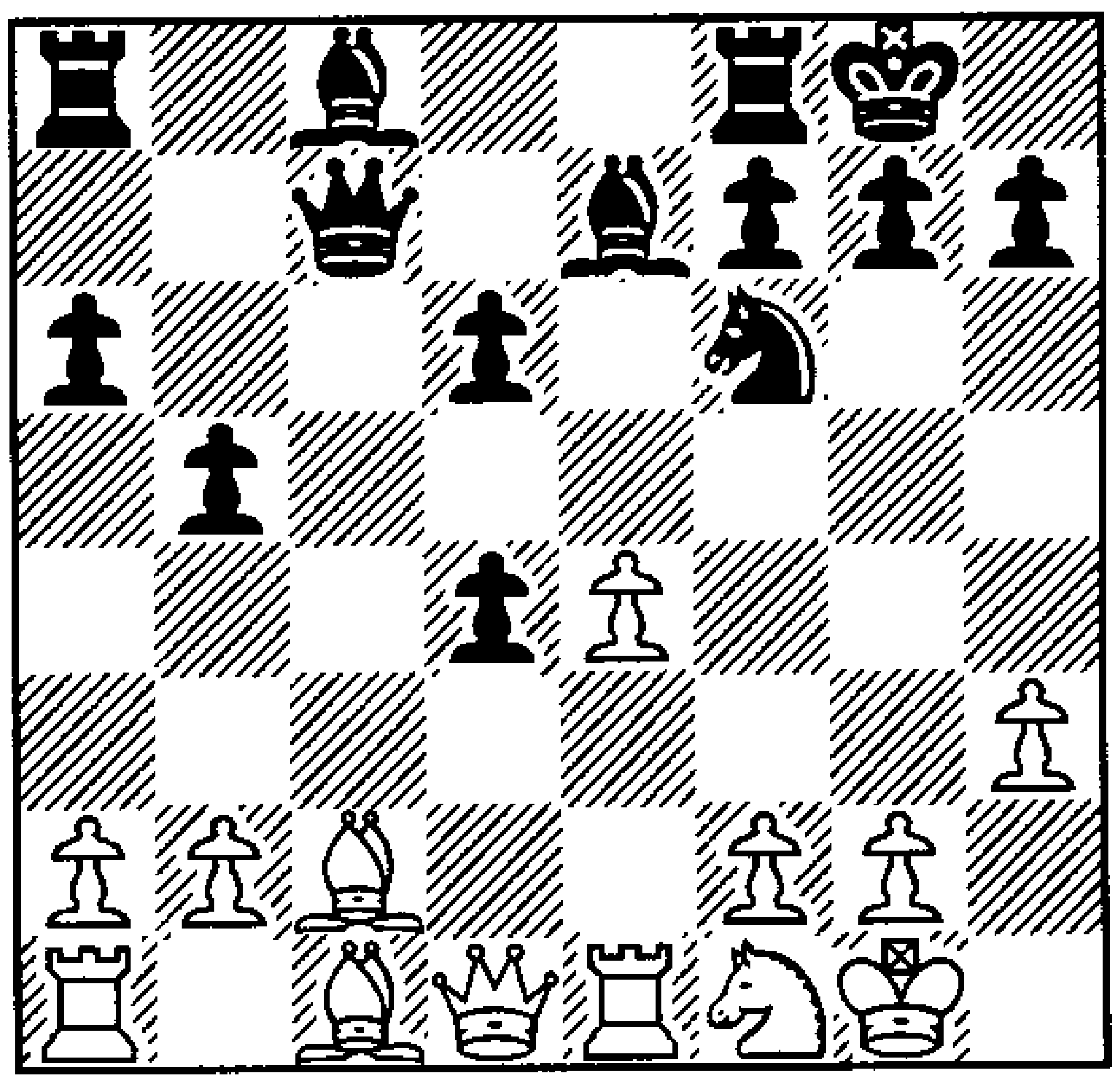
But the strongest is 13 d5! (it is because of this that nowadays ...Na5-c6 is not popular) 13...♘d8 14 a4 ♖b8 15 axb5 axb5 16 b4, as in the games Karpov-Spassky (41st USSR Championship, Moscow 1973) and Karpov-Unzicker (Nice Olympiad 1974), which are analysed in the second volume.

13...cxd4 14 cxd4 ♘xd4

Also good is 14...exd4 (with the idea of ...♕b6, ...♗e6 and ...♘d7) 15 ♖e2 (15 b3 d5!; 15 ♗g5 h6 16 ♗h4 ♖e8 17 ♖c1 ♕b6 18 ♕d2 ♗e6 19 ♗b1 ♘e5! Leonhardt-Rubinstein, San Sebastian 1911; 15 ♘g3 g6 or 15...♖e8 with equality) 15...♕b6 16 ♖d2 d5 17 exd5 ♘xd5 18 ♘xd4 ♗b4 and it is doubtful whether White has anything.

15 ♘xd4 exd4

An unusual *tabiya* of this match.



16 ♘g3

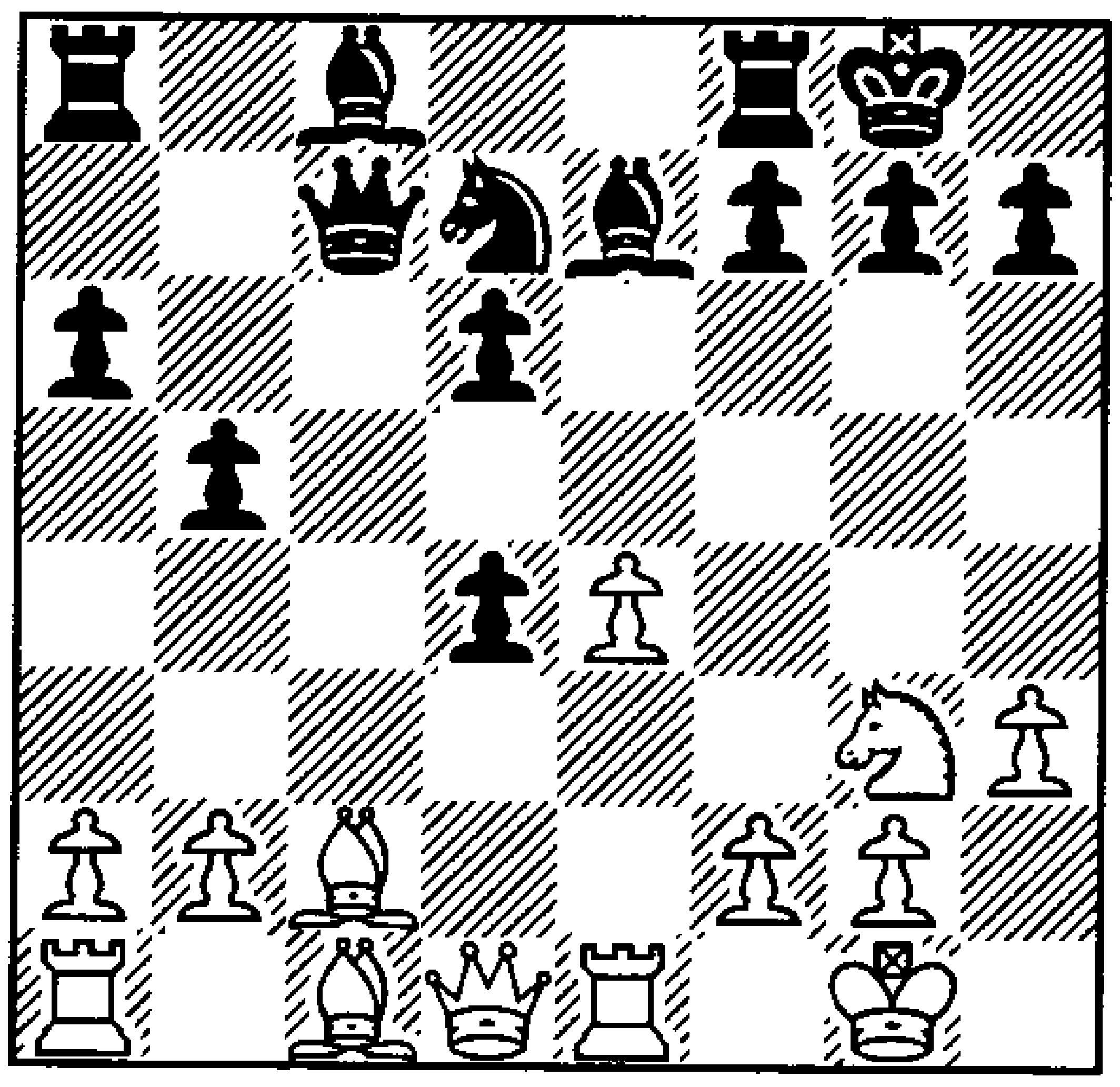
In the fifth game Lasker successfully tried 16 ♗g5 (16 b3 d5! is equal; 16 ♗b3 ♕b6 17 ♗g5 ♖a7!) 16...h6 17 ♗h4 ♕b6 18 ♕d3 g5?! (18...♖d8 19 ♖ed1 ♗e6 equalises) 19 ♗g3 ♗e6 20 ♖ad1 ♖fc8 21 ♗b1 ♘d7 22 e5! ♘f8 23 ♕f3! d5 24 ♕h5 ♔g7 25 f4 f5? (25...♘g6 was more tenacious) 26 exf6+ ♗xf6 27 fxg5 hxg5 28 ♗e5 d3+ 29 ♔h1 ♘g6 30 ♕xg5 ♗f7 31 ♘g3 ♗xe5 32 ♖xe5 ♖h8 33 ♗xd3 ♖a7 34

♖de1 ♔f8 35 ♗xg6 ♕xg6 36 ♕e3 ♖c7 37 ♘f5 ♕c6 38 ♕g5 1-0. 'For the first time I was outplayed from beginning to end.' (Tarrasch)

I should remind you that the challenger played the fifth game in a depressed state after his heavy defeat in the fourth. Otherwise he would easily have discovered the strong reply 16...♕c5!, found by the analysts only after the match: 17 ♗h4 ♗e6 18 ♖c1 ♕b4 19 b3 ♖ac8 20 ♘g3 d5 with advantage to Black. Which, in my view, after 21 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 22 exd5 ♗xd5 23 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 24 ♕h5+ ♔g8 25 ♕xd5 ♖xc1 26 ♖xc1 ♕d2 is not really so great, although it is clear that the limit of White's dreams is a draw.

16...♘d7

'Weaker is 16...g6 17 ♗b3 ♕b6 18 ♗h6 ♖e8 19 ♕f3 ♗e6 20 ♘f5! with advantage to White (Euwe-Kramer, Amsterdam 3rd matchgame 1941),' theory stated for more than half a century, but after 20...♗f8! this advantage is somehow not apparent.



17 ♗b3?!

According to Euwe, simpler is 17 ♘f5! ♗f6 18 ♖e2 (18 ♗b3 ♕b6 19 ♗d5 ♗b7 is equal) 18...♕b6 (18...♗b7 19 ♘xd4 ♘c5) 19 ♖d2, 'regaining the pawn with a good game.' However, here too Black is perfectly alright: 19...♘e5! 20 ♘xd4 ♘c4 (20...♗g5!?) 21 ♖d3 ♗b7 22 b3 ♗xe4! (in my view, this is stronger than the 22...♘e5 suggested by the commentators) 23 bxc4 ♗xd4! 24 ♖xd4 ♗xc2 etc.

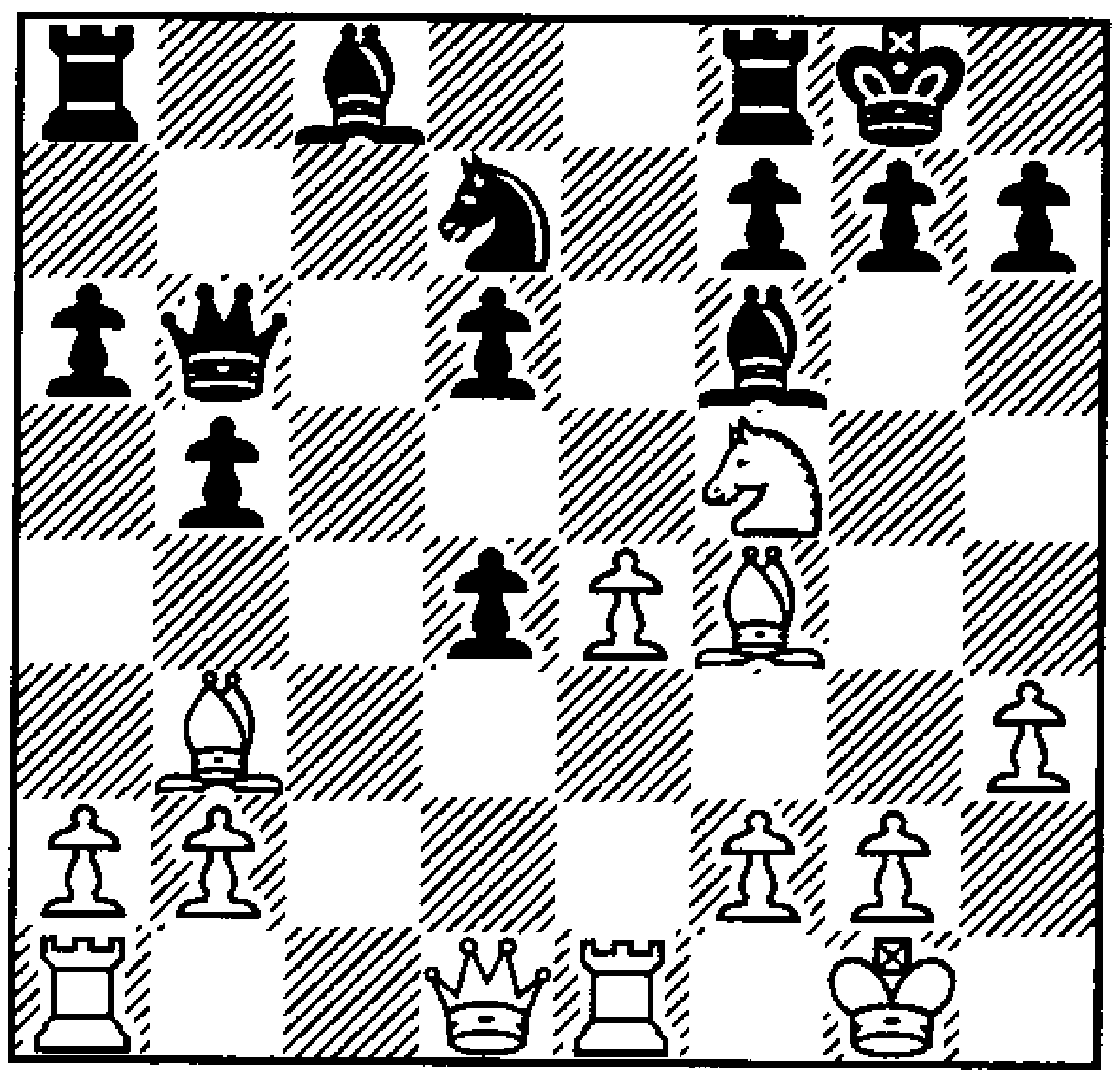
'The pawn could have been regained without great effort, if that had been my intention,' writes Lasker. 'But I was enticed by an attack, since the temptation was very great. The attack did not succeed, and this decided the outcome of the game.'

17...♕b6

17...g6 is also possible, allowing White to regain the d4-pawn. The weakness at d6 is balanced by the weakness at e4, and Black has quite a good position (which was demonstrated with particular success in similar set-ups by Keres).

18 ♘f5 ♗f6 19 ♗f4?!

Schlechter quite reasonably suggested 19 ♗d5 ♖a7 20 b3, to which Tarrasch replied 20...♘e5 21 ♗b2 ♗xf5 22 exf5 d3 (with the threat of ...♘f3+ and ...♗xb2), although here 23 ♖b1! (but not 23 ♗xe5? ♗xe5 24 ♖c1 ♕d4 and Black wins) 23...♖c7 24 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 25 ♕xd3 would still have maintained the balance. Therefore, in my view, 23...♖d8!? 24 ♗c1 ♖e7 is more interesting.



19...♘e5!

It is important to retain the dark-squared bishop! 'The world champion had probably based his calculation on 19...♗e5? 20 ♗xe5 (*20 ♕g4 g6 21 ♘e7+ ♔g7 – G. K.*) 20...dxe5? (relatively best is 20...♘xe5 21 ♘xd4) 21 ♕g4 ♕f6 22 ♗d5 ♖a7 23 ♖ac1 with a strong attack.' (Neishtadt) But in my opinion, after 23...♘b6 24 ♖c6 ♗e6 things are not so clear.

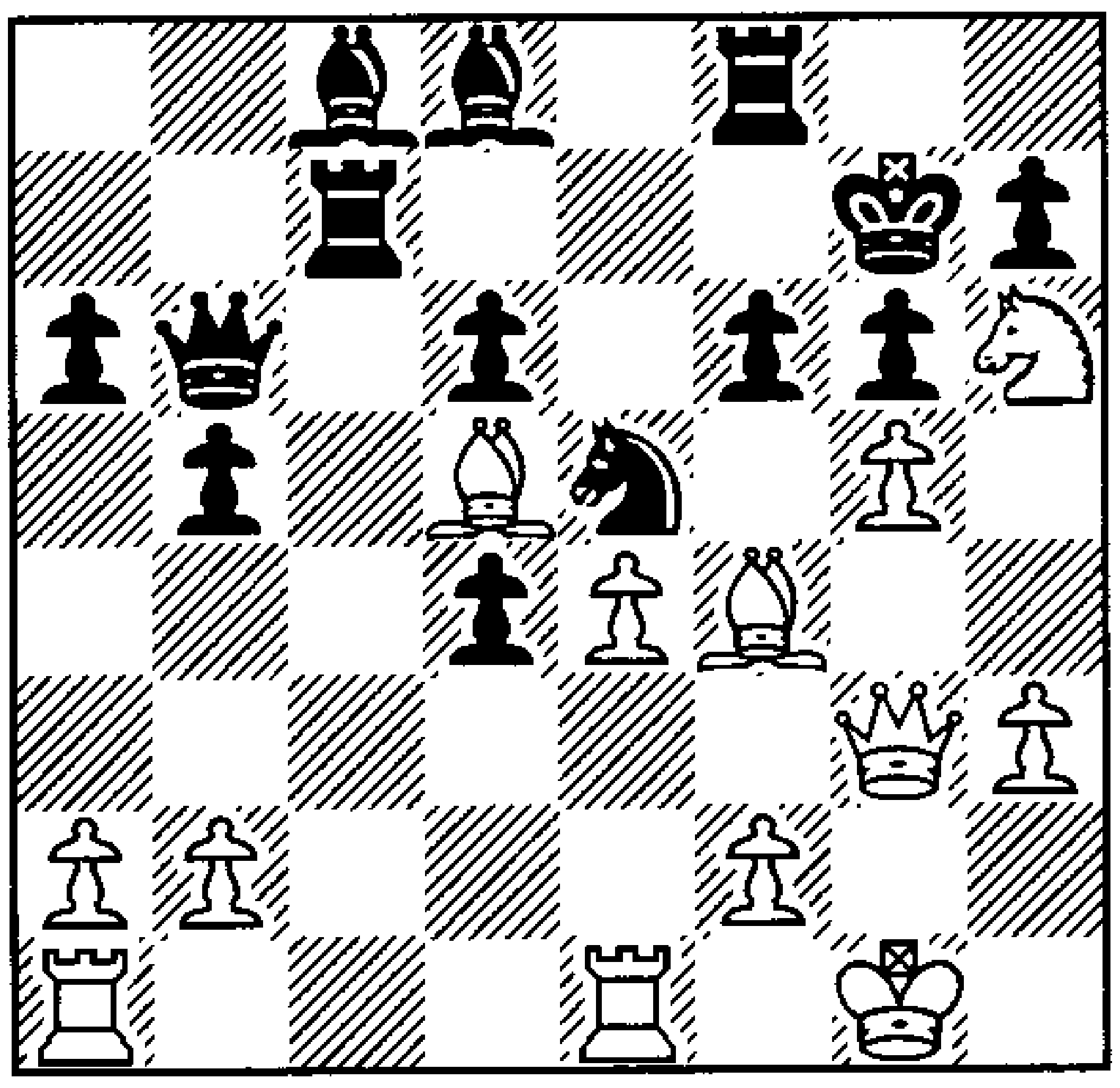
20 ♗d5

After the greedy 20 ♘xd4 there would

have followed 20...♘c4! 21 ♘e2 (there is nothing else: 21 ♗xc4? ♗xd4 22 ♗d5 ♗xf2+; 21 ♗e3?! ♘xe3 22 fxe3 ♗b7) 21...♗e6 with the initiative.

20...♖a7 21 ♕b3 (threatening 22 ♘xd4 ♕xd4? 23 ♗e3 and ♗xa7) **21...♖c7 22 g4 g6 23 ♘h6+ ♔g7 24 g5 ♗d8 25 ♕g3 f6!**

An accurate move, bringing the opponent's activity to a standstill.



26 ♘f5+!?

With a heavy heart, since both 26 gxf6+ ♗xf6 and 26 h4? fxg5 27 hxg5 ♖xf4! 28 ♕xf4 ♗xg5! (29 ♕xg5? ♘f3+ and ...♘xg5) are bad for White.

26...♔h8!

There was a drawing opportunity for White after 26...gxf5?! 27 gxf6+ ♔h8 (27...♔xf6?? 28 ♕g5 mate) 28 ♗h6 ♖ff7 29 ♗xf7 ♖xf7 30 ♗g7+ ♔g8 31 ♗h6+.

27 ♘h4 (alas, forced) **27...fxg5 28 ♗xg5 ♗xg5 29 ♕xg5 d3!**

A catastrophe on f2! 'After repelling a seemingly very dangerous attack, Black launched an irresistible counter-offensive.' (Lasker) 'I was able to decide the game with the help of this rejected pawn.' (Tarrasch)

30 ♔h1 (30 ♕g3 ♖c2; 30 ♖f1 ♗xh3) **30...♖c2 31 ♖e3 ♖fxf2 32 ♘g2**

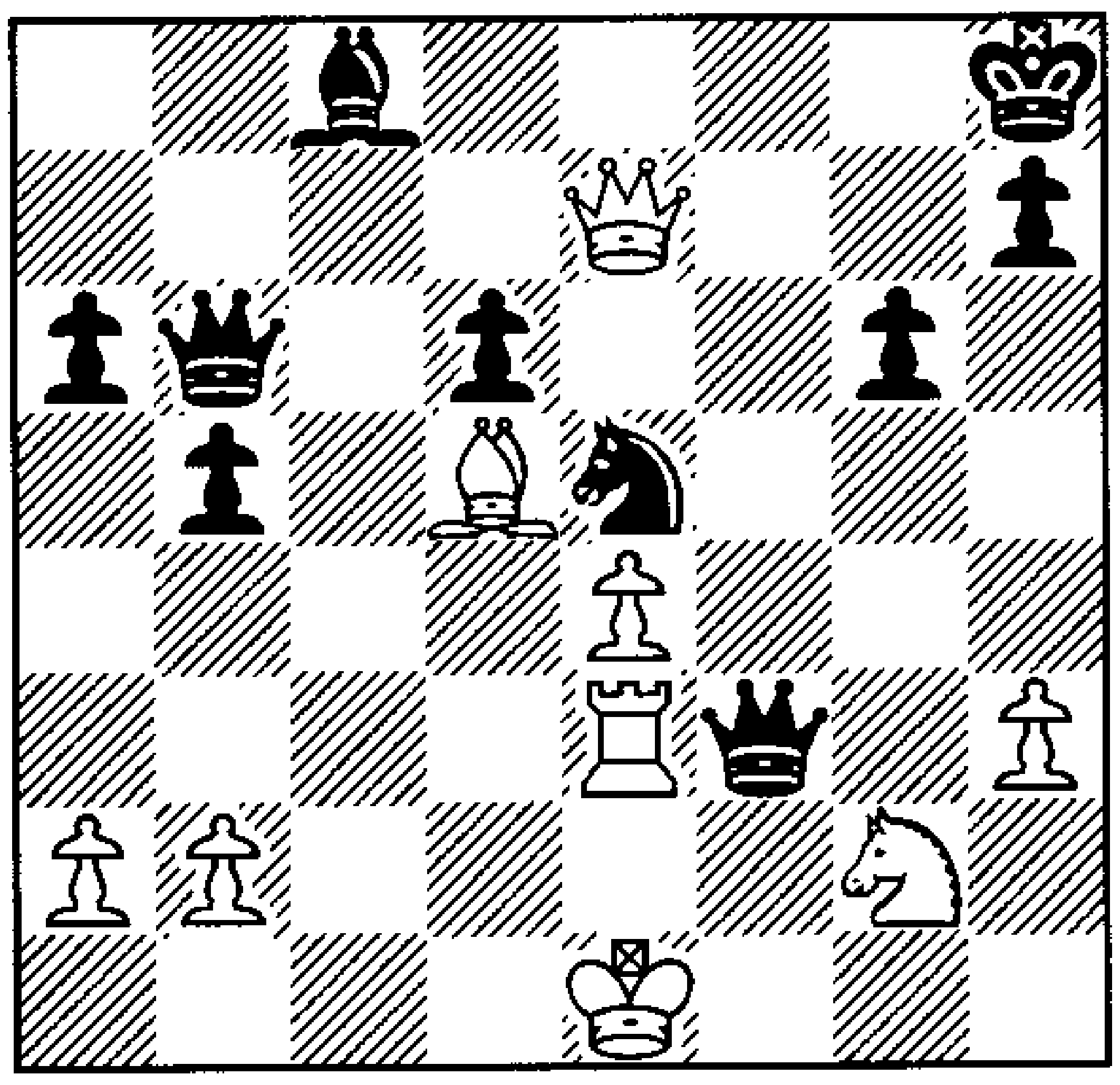
After the cunning 32 ♘f3 Black would have decided matters by 32...♖xf3 (but not 32...♘xf3?? 33 ♕f6 mate) 33 ♖xf3 ♖h2+! 34 ♔xh2 ♘xf3+ and ...♘xg5.

32...d2 33 ♖g1 ♖c1 34 ♕e7 ♖xg1+

34...d1♕ 35 ♕e8+ ♔g7 36 ♕e7+ ♘f7 would also have won, but the simplest, of course, was 34...♖ff1! 35 ♕e8+ ♔g7 36 ♕g8+ (or 36 ♕e7+ ♘f7 37 ♖xf1 ♖xf1+ and ...d1♕) 36...♔h6 37 ♖xf1 ♖xf1+ and ...d1♕.

35 ♔xg1 d1♕+ 36 ♔xf2 ♕f3+ 37 ♔e1

A picturesque position.



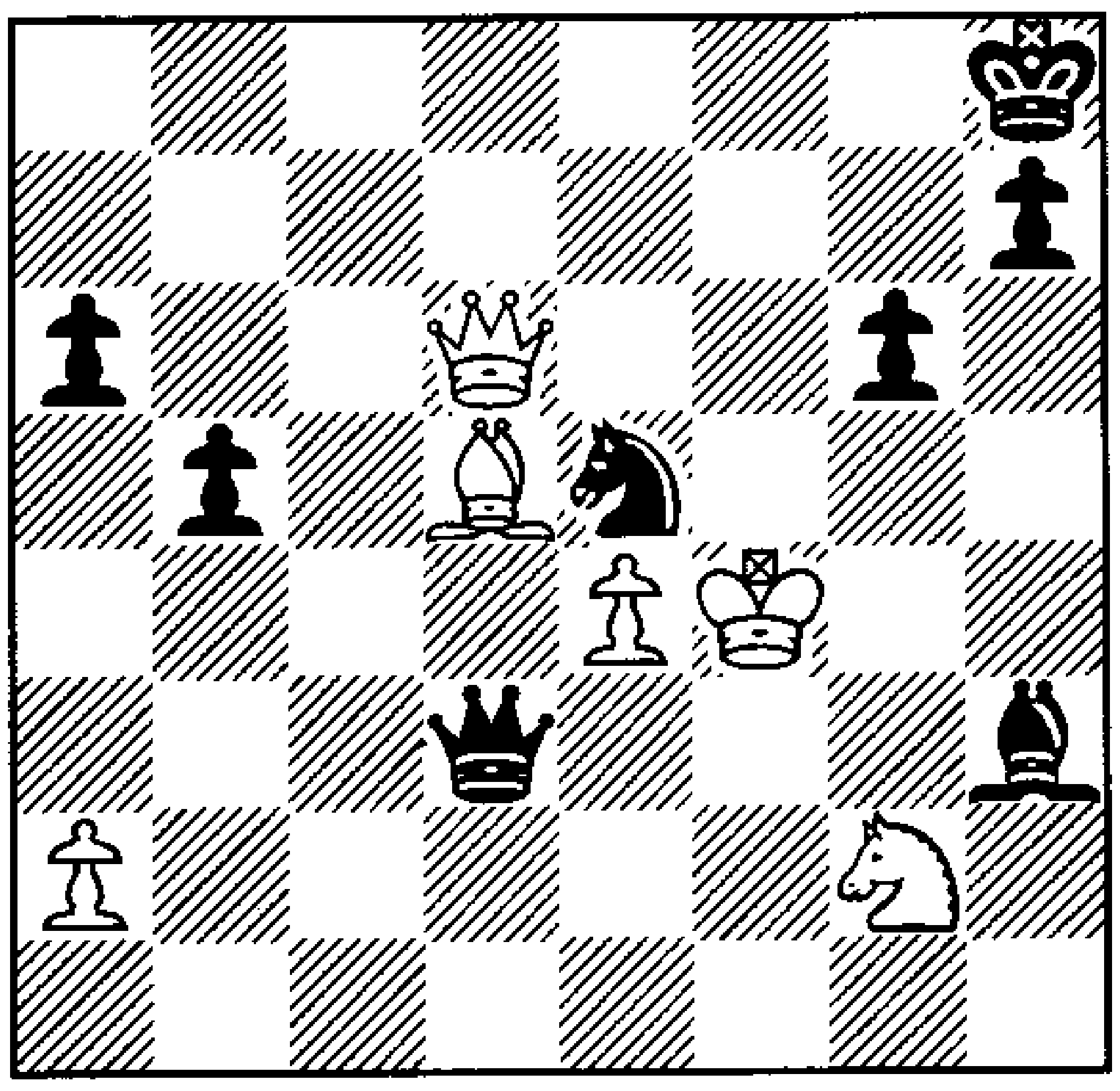
37...♕a5+

It is doubtful whether Alekhine, who also had occasion to give mate with two queens (*Game No.125*), would have missed 37...♘d3+! 38 ♔d2 (38 ♖xd3 ♕bf2 mate) 38...♕a5+ 39 ♔c2 (39 ♔xd3 ♕d1 mate) 39...♕xg2+ 40 ♔xd3 ♕gd2 mate.

38 ♖c3 ♗xh3 39 ♕xd6 ♕axc3+ (39...♕g3+! was quicker) **40 bxc3 ♕xc3+ 41 ♔e2**

Or 41 ♔f1 ♕f3+ 42 ♔e1 ♕g3+ 43 ♔d1 ♗g4+ 44 ♔c1 ♘d3+.

41...♕c2+ 42 ♔e3 ♕d3+ 43 ♔f4



43...g5+! 0-1

44 ♔xg5 (44 ♔xe5 ♕c3 mate – a problem-like finish!) 44...♘f7+ and ...♘xd6.

The challenger had raised his head! Now much depended on which of the two players would succeed in landing the next blow. And at this moment was played one of their most famous games, determining the outcome of the match.

Game 54

S.Tarrasch-Em.Lasker

World Championship Match,
Düsseldorf/Munich 1908, fourth game
Ruy Lopez C66

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6 4 0-0 d6

Not only Lasker, but also Capablanca (cf. *Game No.81*) followed the first world champion in playing the rather passive, but solid Steinitz Defence. But Tarrasch condemned the variation with ...d7-d6, saying that 'every cramped position harbours the germ of defeat'.

5 d4 ♗d7 6 ♘c3 ♗e7 7 ♖e1 exd4 8 ♘xd4 ♘xd4

In the second game after 8...0-0! 9 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 (according to Steinitz, 9...bxc6 10 ♗d3 ♖e8 is more solid) 10 ♗xc6 bxc6 11 ♘e2 ♕d7? (this square is for the knight!) 12 ♘g3 ♖fe8 13 b3 ♖ad8 14 ♗b2 White gained a clear advantage. But castling served Lasker faithfully in his later matches with Janowski (1909), Schlechter (1910) and Capablanca (1921).

9 ♕xd4 (9 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 is equal) **9...♗xb5 10 ♘xb5 0-0**

After 10...a6 11 ♘c3 0-0 12 ♗g5 ♘d7 13 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 14 ♘d5 ♕d8 15 ♖e3 White also has a slight initiative (Capablanca-Thomas, Hastings 1919). Incidentally, this game had a very curious finish (*Game No.87*).

11 ♗g5

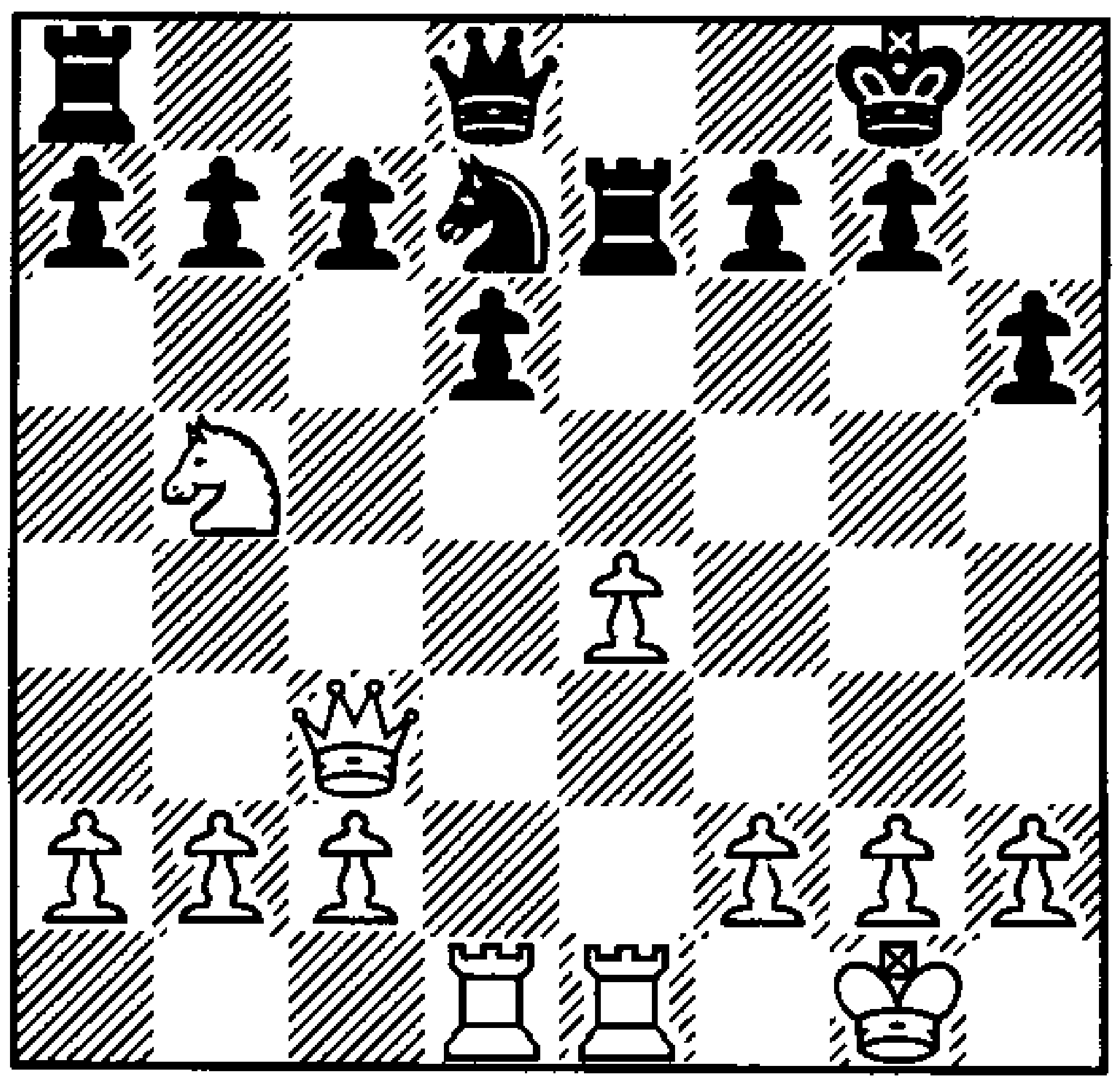
11 ♗f4!? is also sensible. Capablanca suggested 11 ♕c3 c6 12 ♘d4, but better is 11...a6! 12 ♘d4 ♘d7 13 ♘f5 ♗f6 14 ♕g3 ♘e5 with level chances.

11...h6 12 ♗h4 ♖e8 (12...♘g4!?) **13 ♖ad1** (with the threat of e4-e5) **13...♘d7 14 ♗xe7**

If 14 ♗g3, then 14...♗f6 15 ♕c4 a6! 16 ♘xc7 ♖c8 (16...♘b6!) 17 ♗xd6 ♗e5 18 ♗xe5 (18 ♕d3!) 18...♖xe5 19 ♕d4 ♕xc7! is equal (Tarrasch).

14...♖xe7 15 ♕c3!?

Intending ♘d4-f5 and at the same time hitting the c7-pawn. 15 c4 would have led to a position from the game Capablanca-Marshall (New York 4th matchgame 1909), where after 15...♖e6 16 f4 a6 17 ♘c3 ♘f6 18 ♘d5 ♘xd5 19 exd5 ♖e7 a draw was agreed. Later 15 f4!? a6 16 ♘c3 ♖e6 17 ♖f1 ♕f6 18 ♕b4 was recommended, with some advantage.



Tarrasch must have been happy with the outcome of the opening: White has a slight but enduring advantage, and chances of increasing it without any risk. For example, 15...♘f8 (15...♘f6?! 16 e5) 16 ♘d4!, and 16...g6 noticeably weakens the king's defences, or 15...♘c5 16 f3 (the tempting 16 e5?! is parried by 16...♕d7 17 ♘d4 ♖xe5 18 ♖xe5 dxe5 19 ♕xc5 exd4 20 ♖xd4 ♖e8! 21 h3 ♕e7 with equality) 16...♕d7 17 ♘d4 ♘e6 18 ♘f5 ♖ee8 19 ♕b4 ♖ab8 20 e5 d5 21 ♕g4 etc.

Lasker realised perfectly well that his only chance of avoiding a prolonged and gruelling defence was to dislodge Tarrasch from his confident state. To do this he had to create something unusual, contrary to all the positional rules and standards of chess wisdom!

15...♖e5! (a brilliant way of defending the c7-pawn) **16 ♘d4!**

For the moment Tarrasch is equal to the occasion: he threatens ♘f5 and f2-f4. In the event of 16 ♕xc7? (16 ♘xc7? ♖c5 wins) 16...♖xb5 17 ♕xd6 ♖xb2 18 ♕xd7 ♕xd7 19 ♖xd7 ♖c8! Black has the better endgame.

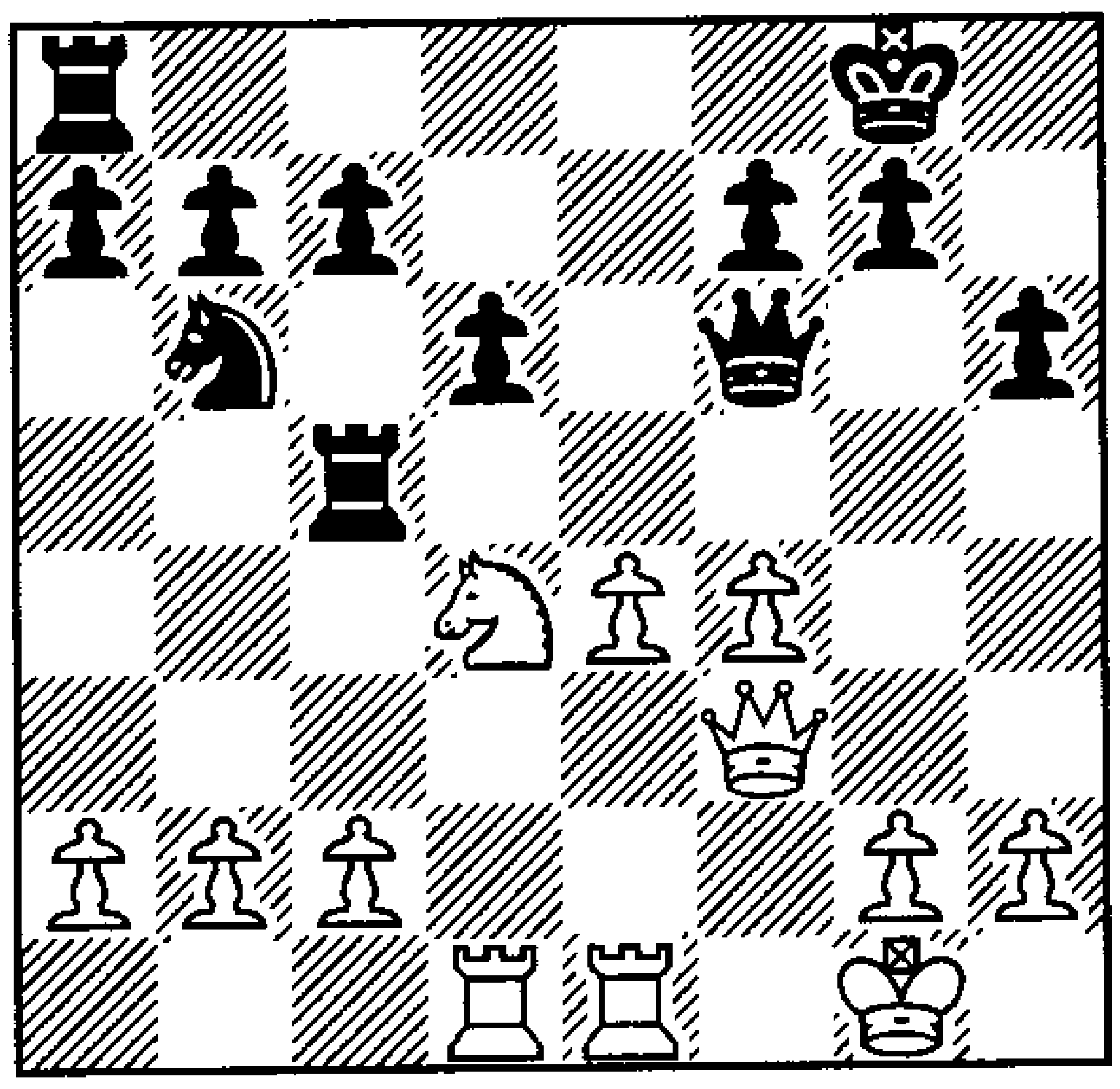
16...♖c5!

Of course, from the purely positional viewpoint this move is very dangerous: the stray rook may cause Black significant problems. But, firstly, 16...♘c5 17 f3 leaves White with all the advantages of his position, and secondly, the impudent behaviour of the rook is bound to upset the opponent's composure... **17 ♕b3** (if 17 ♕g3, then 17...♕g5 is quite good) **17...♘b6** (17...a5!?) **18 f4**

Cutting off the rook's retreat. Many commentators criticised this move, saying that 'Tarrasch was influenced by Lasker's psychological thinking,' and recommending 18 ♖e3 or 18 ♘f5. But Mark Dvoretsky's evaluation is closer to the truth: 'By advancing his pawn to f4, White takes control of the e5- and g5-squares, and prepares to cramp the opponent by ♕f3, b2-b3 and c2-c4. From the fact that Tarrasch lost the game, it by no means follows that all his decisions were incorrect.'

18...♕f6 19 ♕f3

An important moment for evaluating the correctness of Black's idea.



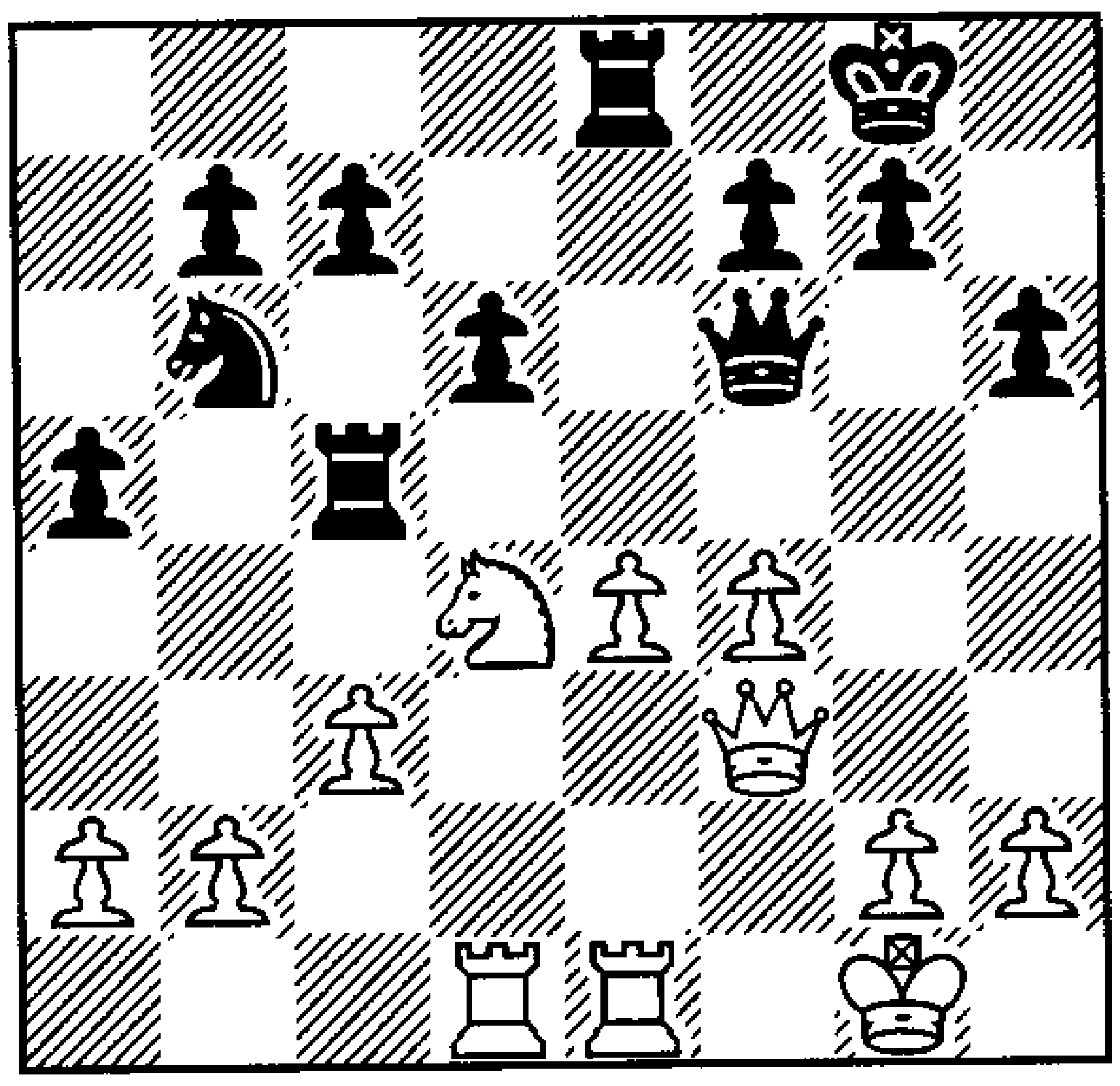
19...♖e8?

Black is apparently tempted by a trap: 20 b3? (with the logical intention of playing c2-c4) 20...♘d5! 21 ♘e2 (21 exd5? ♖xe1+ and ...♕xd4+) 21...♘b4, and it is now White who has problems. Later Lasker suggested 19...a5!? 20 b3 a4 21 c4 (after 21 b4 ♖c4 22 c3 Black has an extra tempo compared with the game) 21...axb3 22 axb3 ♖ca5 (and if 23 ♘b5 ♕e7 24 ♕f2, then 24...♖a2).

However, as was mentioned by Dvoretsky, the soundest way to equalise was found by a pupil from his school, Ilya Makariev – 19...♘a4! For example: 20 e5 (20 b3?! ♘c3; 20 ♕b3 ♘b6 21 ♕f3 ♘a4 is equal) 20...dxe5 21 ♕xb7 ♖d8 22 ♘b3 (22 ♕xa7 ♖xd4 23 ♖xd4 exd4 24 ♕xa4 ♕xf4) 22...♖xd1 23 ♖xd1 ♖xc2 24 ♕e4 ♕g6! 25 f5 ♕c6 etc.

20 c3! (not losing his presence of mind) **20...a5!**

To the aid of the rook!



21 b3

If 21 ♕d3 Tarrasch did not like 21...♖h5. '21 ♘b3 ♖b5 (*inferior is 21...♖c4?! 22 ♘xa5 ♖a4 in view of 23 ♘xb7 ♖xa2 24 b4 ♖c2 25 ♖c1 – G. K.*) 22 ♕e2 was tempting, intending 22...c6 23 ♘d4 ♖c5 24 ♕f2 with an obvious advantage. However, Black would have replied 22...♖f5! 23 g3 a4.' (Dvoretsky) True, but here 24 e5! dxe5 (24...axb3 25 exf6! etc.) 25 ♘d4 is unpleasant.

21...a4 22 b4

Tarrasch would appear to have become nervous... The consistent 22 c4! axb3 23 axb3 would have 'stifled' the rook at c5 and condemned Black to a difficult defence:

1) 23...c6 24 ♘f5! (the most energetic) 24...d5 25 ♕f2 (or 25 ♕e3!? ♘d7 26 ♕h3 ♖xe4 27 ♖xe4 dxe4 28 ♘d6 Makariev) 25...♘d7 26 g4! (according to Dvoretsky, 26 ♘g3 is also good) with strong pressure;

2) 23...♖a5 24 ♘b5! ♕e7 25 ♕f2 (but not 25 e5?! d5!) with the threat of ♘xd6 and again the better prospects (associated with e4-e5 or ♘c3-d5).

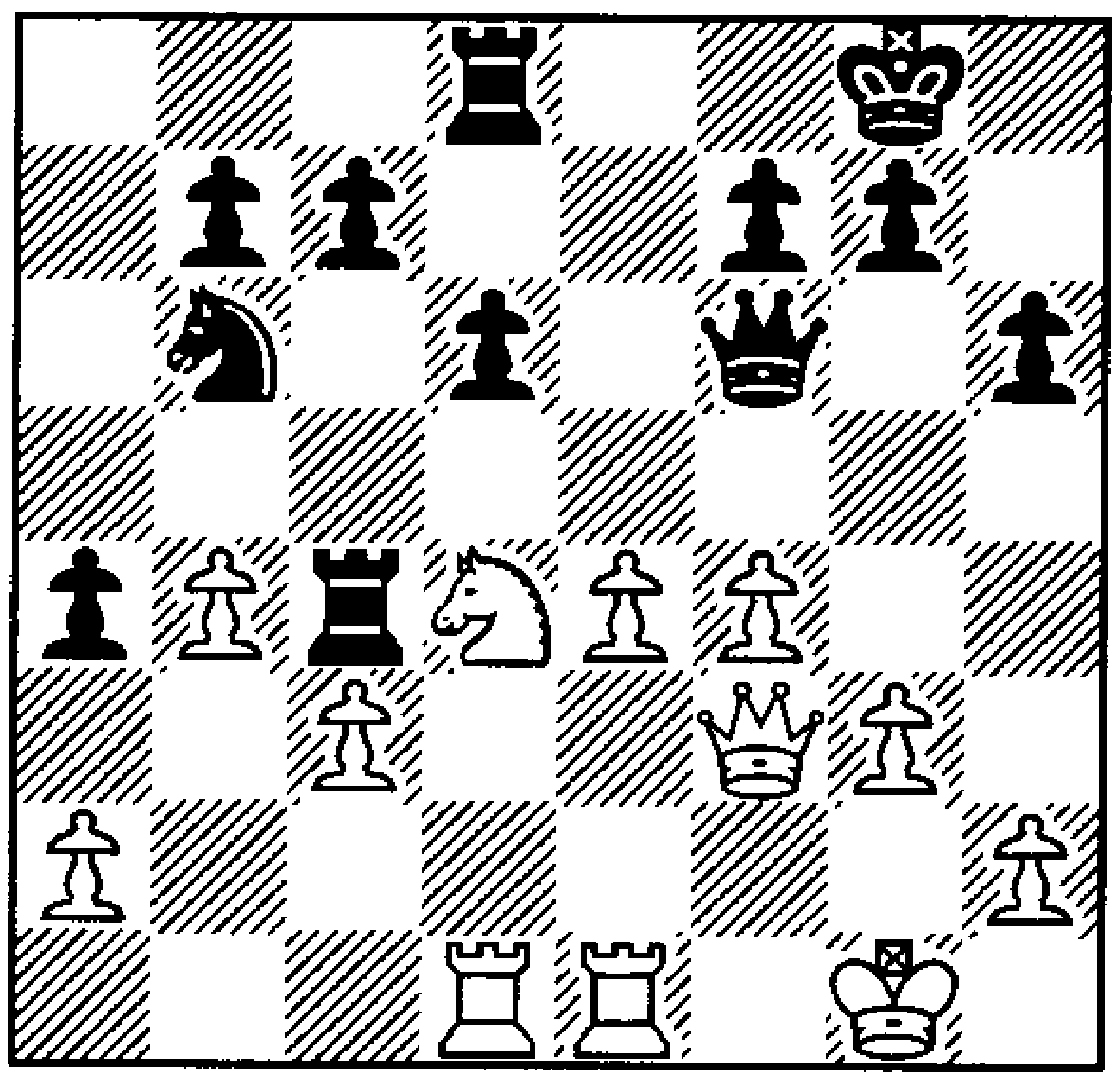
About the move in the game, which also retains a marked advantage, Dvoretsky made the following subtle comment: 'After 22 c4 the position is clear and established, and White's subsequent play is simpler. After 22 b4 the position is more complicated, more unusual. Lasker was superior to his opponent in tactics, and was better at finding his way in dynamic positions. In addition, he was significantly younger than Tarrasch, more robust and with greater stamina. It is clear who was favoured by the further complication of the play.'

22...♖c4

Although the rook is trapped, it is exerting constant pressure on c3, so that it is now doing some work!

23 g3 (if immediately 23 ♘b5?! ♖d8 24 ♖e3, then 24...d5! 25 e5 ♕xf4 26 ♕xf4 ♖xf4) **23...♖d8**

Preparing ...c7-c5. The immediate 23...c5? was bad because of 24 ♘b5.



24 ♖e3?

In Réti's opinion, 'White is now positionally outplayed. He has, as against the threat 24...c5 no defence from a positional point of view. Therefore he attempts to create one by means of a combination, which, as is usual with all combinations resorted to in a state of mere desperation, does not get home.'

It is from such components, influenced by the result of the game and the accompanying impressions, that chess mythology is created! What cause is there here for desperation?! After all, even the crude 24 e5 dxe5 25 ♖xe5 retains some advantage. And if one is hoping for more, it is easy to find against ....c7-c5 a 'defence from the positional point of view', and not just one! For example:

1) 24 ♕e3!? (Rellstab) 24...♖e8 (24...c5?! 25 ♘b5; 24...a3 25 ♘b5 ♘a4 26 e5! dxe5 27 fxe5 ♕e7 28 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 29 e6 ♕e7 30 ♕d3 wins for White – Dvoretsky) 25 ♕d3! ♖d8 26 ♘b5 with the threat of e4-e5 or ♖e3;

2) 24 ♖b1!? (Chernin), planning ♕d3, ♖e3 and ♘b5-a3, and if 24...c5?! (24...a3?! 25 ♖b3), then 25 bxc5 dxc5 26 e5;

3) 24 ♖d3!? (Makariev) 24...c5?! 25 bxc5 ♖xc5 (25...dxc5 26 ♘b5!) 26 ♖b1 etc.;

4) 24 a3! (Tarrasch). In my opinion, this prophylaxis is the best – the rook at c4 is stalemated, and in the event of 24...c5?! 25 ♘b5 cxb4 26 cxb4 the d6-pawn is extremely weak and White has a clear advantage.

Incidentally, Tarrasch himself explained his error rather simply: 'Up till now I had conducted the game irreproachably, but here I was seized by the unfortunate idea of a rook sacrifice, which in view of time-trouble I was unable to calculate properly.'

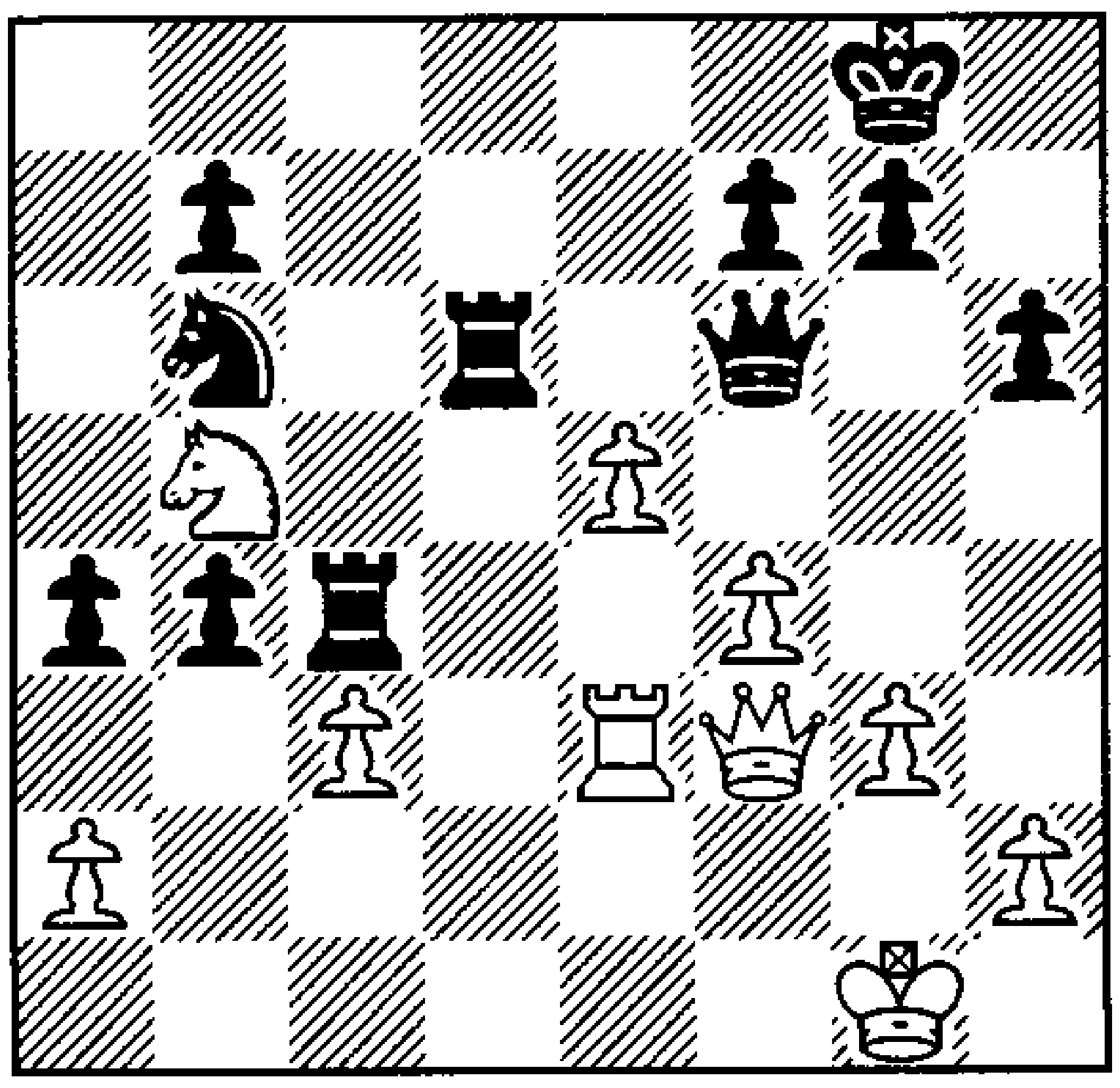
24...c5 25 ♘b5?

Driven by a passionate desire to punish his opponent for his violation of the chess laws, Tarrasch 'goes off the rails'! Later he lamented: 'If I hadn't been so carried away by the idea of the rook sacrifice, I would have played 25 ♘c2 cxb4 26 ♘xb4 with a good game thanks to the attack on the d6-pawn.'

Also suitable was Richard Teichmann's

recommendation 25 bxc5! ♖xc5 (25...dxc5? 26 e5 or 26 ♘b5) 26 ♖b1 ♘c4 27 ♖d3 and ♘c2-e3-d5 with equal chances.

25...cxb4 26 ♖xd6? (that 'desperate' combination referred to earlier; the more sober 26 cxb4! ♖xb4 27 ♘c3 ♖c8 28 ♖ed3 ♖c6 29 a3 ♖b3 30 ♘e2 would still have retained possibilities of a defence) **26...♖xd6 27 e5**



27...♖xf4!!

And here is the refutation. Moreover, by the irony of fate the fatal blow is struck by the abhorrent 'hooligan' rook! In Dvoretsky's opinion, White's combination 'would have been incorrect even if this rejoinder had not been found: 27...♖d1+!? 28 ♕xd1 ♕c6 was also very strong.' But in this case after 29 ♕d8+ ♔h7 30 e6! fxe6 31 ♕d3+ ♔g8 (31...g6?! 32 ♘d4) 32 ♕d8+ ♔h7 33 ♕d3+ White would have maintained the balance.

28 gxf4

Also hopeless are both 28 ♕xf4 ♖d1+ 29 ♔f2 ♕xf4+ 30 gxf4 ♘d5 or 30...♖d2+, and 28 exf6 ♖xf3 29 ♖xf3 ♖d1+ 30 ♔g2 ♖d2+ (30...♘d5!?) 31 ♖f2 ♖xf2+ 32 ♔xf2 b3 or 32...♘d5 (Tarrasch).

28...♕g6+ 29 ♔h1?!

No better was 29 ♔f1 ♕b1+ 30 ♖e1 ♕d3+ 31 ♕xd3 ♖xd3 32 ♔e2 ♖h3 33 cxb4 ♘d5! and Black wins. The rest is clear without any commentary.

29...♕b1+ 30 ♔g2 ♖d2+ 31 ♖e2 ♕xa2 32 ♖xd2 ♕xd2+ 33 ♔g3 a3! 34 e6 ♕e1+ 35 ♔g4 ♕xe6+ 36 f5 ♕c4+ 37 ♘d4 a2 38 ♕d1 ♘d5 39 ♕a4 ♘xc3 40 ♕e8+ ♔h7 41 ♔h5 a1♕ 0-1

'In this game, as in many others, I dug my own grave.' (Tarrasch)

The score became 3-1 in Lasker's favour, and the match moved on from Düsseldorf to Munich. The world champion drew some initial conclusions with a depth of thinking that was ahead of the time:

'The two players have gained some knowledge of the force opposing them... In a match it is necessary to understand the psychology of the opponent, in order to decide how to conduct the further offensive. Almost subconsciously, sometimes even involuntarily, each creates in his mind a plastic image of the opponent. This work is necessary, since the concept of playing strength is a highly complex matter. How the opponent conducts himself in joy and grief, in simple and complex situations, in dubious and safe positions, in the moments of origination and ruining of hopes – all this forms his style of play. It consists of many different components. And therefore to compile the psychological resources of the two sides one has to examine a number of games, where the opponent finds himself in a variety of situations... This knowledge is bound to come in useful in the subsequent battle.'

But for Tarrasch, in contrast to his opponent, it hardly came in useful. The fatal fourth game undermined the challenger's confidence in his powers, and a week later in Munich, in front of one and a half thousand spectators, the match went off the rails for him: a submissive loss in the fifth game, a clearly missed win in the endgame of the sixth, and another defeat in the prolonged seventh game...

With the score standing at 5-1 (=1), Lasker came to a halt – a crisis for the leader, typical of match situations. After fighting draws in the eighth and ninth games, Tarrasch pulled himself together and won in the 10th, playing what was probably his best game of the match. In the commentary on its opening stage, it is interesting to follow the development of chess thinking over the intervening one hundred years.

Game 55
S.Tarrasch-Em.Lasker
World Championship Match,
Düsseldorf/Munich 1908, 10th game
Ruy Lopez C67

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6 4 0-0 ♘xe4

After the fourth game Lasker did not play 4...d6 any more in the match.

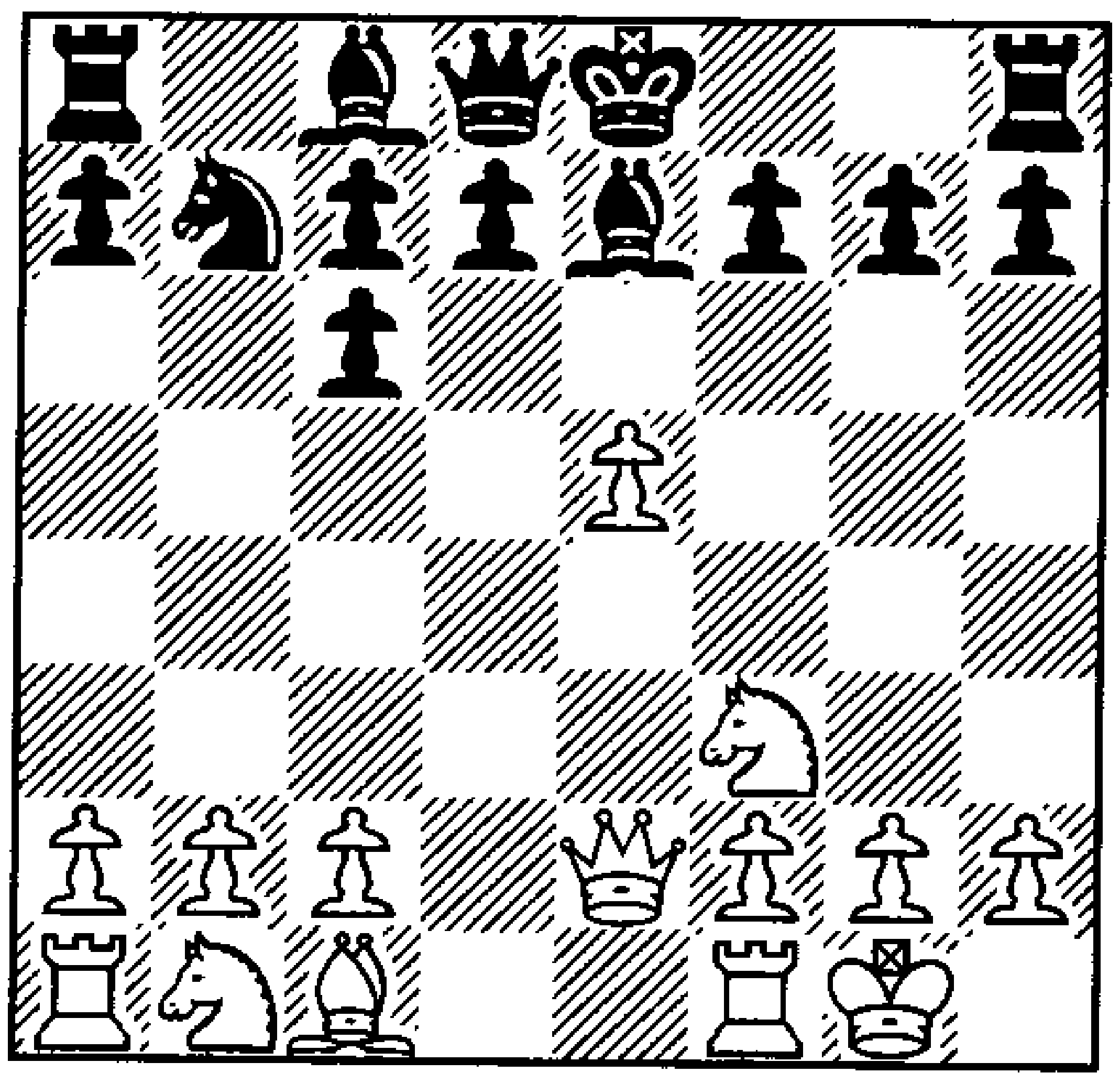
5 d4

In the 19th century, under the influence of Steinitz they also played 5 ♖e1 ♘d6 6 ♘xe5, but after 6...♗e7 7 ♗d3 0-0 8 ♘c3 ♘xe5 9 ♖xe5 c6 10 b3 ♘e8! 11 ♗b2 d5 12 ♕f3 ♗f6 13 ♖e2 ♘c7 (Steinitz-Zukertort, USA 14th matchgame 1886) or 8...♘e8!? 9 ♘d5 ♗f6 10 ♘g4 d6 (Janowski-Lasker, Nuremberg 1896) Black has no problems.

5...♗e7

After the drama in his game with Tarrasch in Hastings 1895, Lasker's attachment to 5...♘d6 had cooled (*Game No.47*).

6 ♕e2! ♘d6 7 ♗xc6 bxc6 8 dxe5 ♘b7



8...♘f5 9 ♕e4! g6 is regarded as a sideline because of 10 ♘d4 (10 ♘c3!?; 10 b3!?) 10...♘xd4 11 ♕xd4 0-0 12 ♗h6 ♖e8 13 ♘c3 (Tarrasch-Taubenhaus, Monte Carlo 1903). However, better is 11...d5!, as my former assistant, grandmaster Vladimirov liked to play (cf. *Shakhmaty v SSSR* 1979, No.12, p.23).

9 ♘c3

The main plan. In the ancient matches Neumann-Anderssen (Berlin 1864-65) 9 ♗e3 0-0 10 ♖d1 ♕e8 11 ♘c3 ♘d8! and 11...d5!? 12 ♘d4 ♘c5 13 f4 ♘e6 were tried many times, as a result of which the entire variation with 4...♘xe4 was called the Berlin Defence.

9 c4 0-0 (Zukertort-Anderssen, Berlin 1st matchgame 1868) 10 ♘c3 has also been known for a long time, for example: 10...♘c5 11 ♗e3 (11 b3 f6! Tal-Smyslov, Moscow 1971) 11...♘e6 12 ♖ad1 f6 13 ♘d4 ♘xd4 14 ♗xd4 fxe5 15 ♕xe5 with a microscopic advantage (Petrosian-Ivkov, Moscow-Belgrade match 1978), or 10...f6 11 ♖e1 (11 ♗e3 ♕e8!; 11 ♗d2!? Tal-Panno, Rio Hondo 1987) 11...fxe5 12 ♘xe5 ♗f6 13 ♗f4 (13 ♕h5 ♘c5!?) 13...♗xe5 14 ♗xe5 d6 15 ♗d4 ♕h4 (15...♗f5!?) 16 ♕d2 ♕f4 17 ♖e3 ♘d8! 18 ♘e4 ♘e6 19 ♗c3 ♗d7 with equal chances (Tal-Dorfman, 44th USSR Championship, Moscow 1976).

But the game Pillsbury-Lasker (St Petersburg 1895/96) went 9 b3 0-0 10 ♗b2 (10 ♗a3!? Romanishin) 10...d5 11 exd6 cxd6 12 ♘bd2 ♗f6 13 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 with an equal position, although after 14 ♖fe1 ♘c5 15 ♘e4 ♘xe4 16 ♕xe4 ♗d7?! (16...d5) 17 c4 ♖fe8 18 ♕d4 ♖xe1+ 19 ♖xe1 ♕xd4 20 ♘xd4 ♔f8 21 ♔f1 a5? 22 a4! ♖e8 23 ♖xe8+ ♔xe8 24 ♔e2 White obtained a favourable endgame and converted it into a win.

9...0-0

9...♘c5 10 ♘d4 ♗a6?! is premature on account of 11 ♕g4! ♗xf1 12 ♕xg7 ♖f8 13 ♔xf1 (Showalter-Tarrasch, Vienna 1898).

10 ♖e1!

Pillsbury's idea: White hinders ...d7-d5. After 10 ♘d4 in the game Winawer-Lasker (Nuremberg 1896) there followed 10...♗c5! 11 ♘f5? (11 ♖d1 ♕e8 12 ♗f4 ♘d8! 13 ♗g3 ♖b8 14 ♖ab1 ♘e6 15 ♘f5 f6! equalises, Kostro-Smyslov, Leipzig Olympiad 1960) 11...d5 12

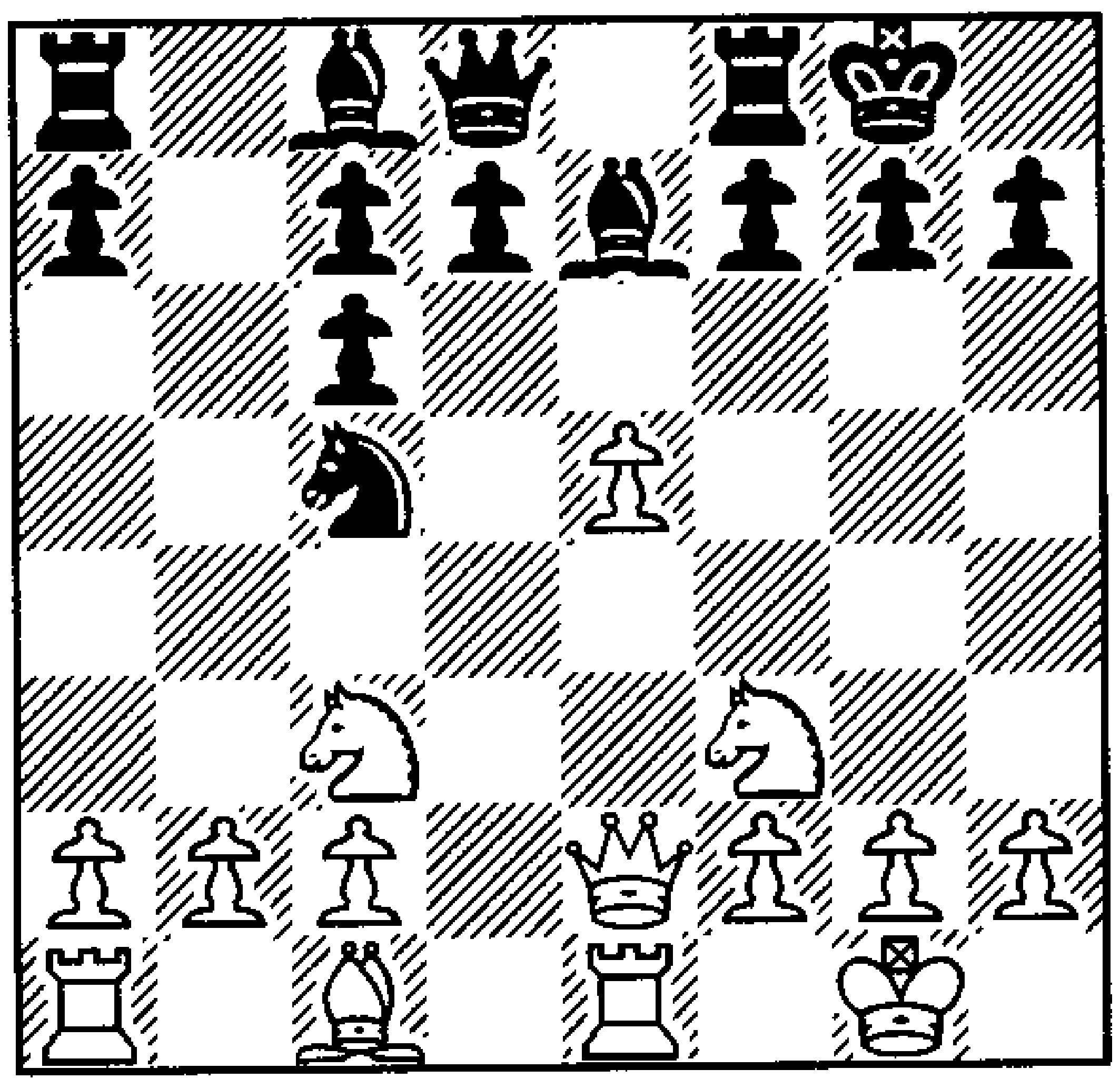
♕g4 ♗xf5 13 ♕xf5 ♖e8 14 ♗f4 ♗d4! 15 ♖fe1 ♘c5 16 ♖ad1 ♗xc3 17 bxc3 ♕c8! with advantage to Black.

10 ♖d1 also promises little in view of 10...d5 (Tal-Pachman, Moscow 1967) or 10...♘c5 11 ♗f4 ♘e6 12 ♗g3 d5! (Shirov-Timman, Dordrecht 1999).

10...♘c5

Immediately activating the ‘bad’ knight. After 10...♖e8 (Pillsbury-Lasker, London 1899) Black has 11 ♕c4!? ♘c5 12 ♘g5 (Chigorin’s idea; if 12 ♗g5 ♗a6?! – 12...d5! – 13 ♗xe7 ♗xc4 14 ♗xd8 ♖axd8 15 ♖ad1 with the better endgame, Hübner-Spassky, Venice 1st matchgame 1988) 12...♗xg5 (according to Fine, more solid is 12...♖f8 13 ♘ce4 ♗a6 14 ♕c3 ♘xe4 15 ♘xe4 f5 16 ♘c5 ♗xc5 17 ♕xc5) 13 ♗xg5 ♕xg5 14 ♕xc5 ♖e6 (14...♕e7!?) 15 ♕d4! with pressure (Schlechter-Janowski, Paris 1900).

Other possibilities are 10...f6 11 ♗f4! (Teichmann-Tarrasch, Monte Carlo 1902) and 10...d5 (nevertheless!) 11 exd6 ♗xd6 12 ♗g5 ♕d7 13 ♖ad1 (Martinez-Lasker, USA simultaneous exhibition 1902) or 13 ♘e4 c5 14 ♖ad1 (Balashov-Smyslov, Leningrad 1977), and Black still has to fight for equality.

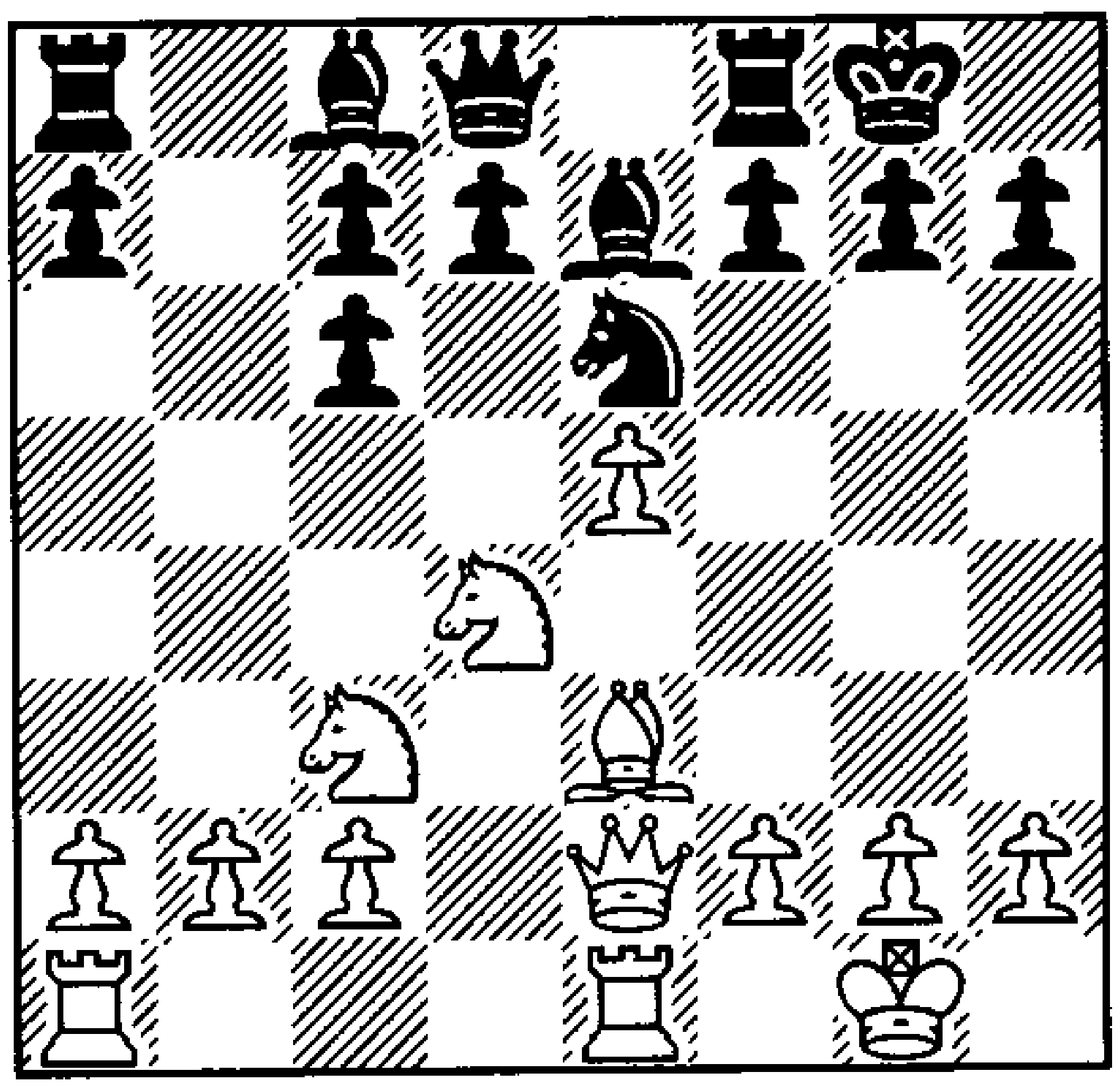


11 ♘d4

Fashionable nowadays is 11 ♗f4!? ♘e6 12 ♗g3 ♖b8 (12...d5 13 exd6 and ♖ad1; 12...f5 13 exf6) 13 b3 f5 14 exf6 ♗xf6 15 ♘e5 ♗xe5 16 ♕xe5 (Geller’s plan), and also 11 ♗e3 ♘e6 12 ♖ad1!? with some initiative for White after both 12...f6 13 ♘d4 ♘xd4 14 ♗xd4 fxe5 15 ♗xe5 (Geller-Lengyel, Moscow 1975), and 12...d5 13 exd6 cxd6 14 ♘d4 ♗d7 15 ♘f5 d5 16 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 17 ♕d2! (Karpov-Korchnoi, Merano 2nd matchgame 1981) or 14...♘xd4 15 ♗xd4 ♖e8 16 ♕f3 d5 17 ♘a4 ♗f8 18 ♗c5 (Tal-Portisch, Brussels 1988).

11...♘e6 12 ♗e3

White has also played both 12 ♘f5 f6! and 12 ♘xe6 fxe6 13 b3 (13 ♘e4 d5! equalises; 13 ♗e3 d5 14 ♘a4 d4!? 15 ♖ad1 c5 16 ♗c1 ♕d5! etc.) 13...♕e8 (13...♗b7!? and ...c6-c5) 14 ♗e3!? (14 ♗b2 ♗b7 15 ♕g4 ½-½ Spassky-Smyslov, Tilburg 1979) 14...♖f5 15 ♘e4! (Anand-Timman, Wijk aan Zee 1999), and Black has to choose between 15...♖xe5 16 ♗f4 ♖f5 17 ♗xc7 ♕f8 and 15...♗b7.



12...♘xd4

Nowadays they also employ the sharp sacrifice of the a7-pawn – 12...♖b8, which has been known since the 1880s. For example: 13 ♘xe6 fxe6 14 ♗xa7 ♖b4!? 15 ♗e3 ♗b7 16 b3 c5! with counterplay, 13 b3 ♗b4 14 ♘xe6 (14 ♕d2!?) 14...fxe6 15 ♕d2 ♖b5!, or 13 ♖ab1 ♘xd4 14 ♗xd4 c5 15 ♗e3 d5 16 exd6 ♗xd6 etc.

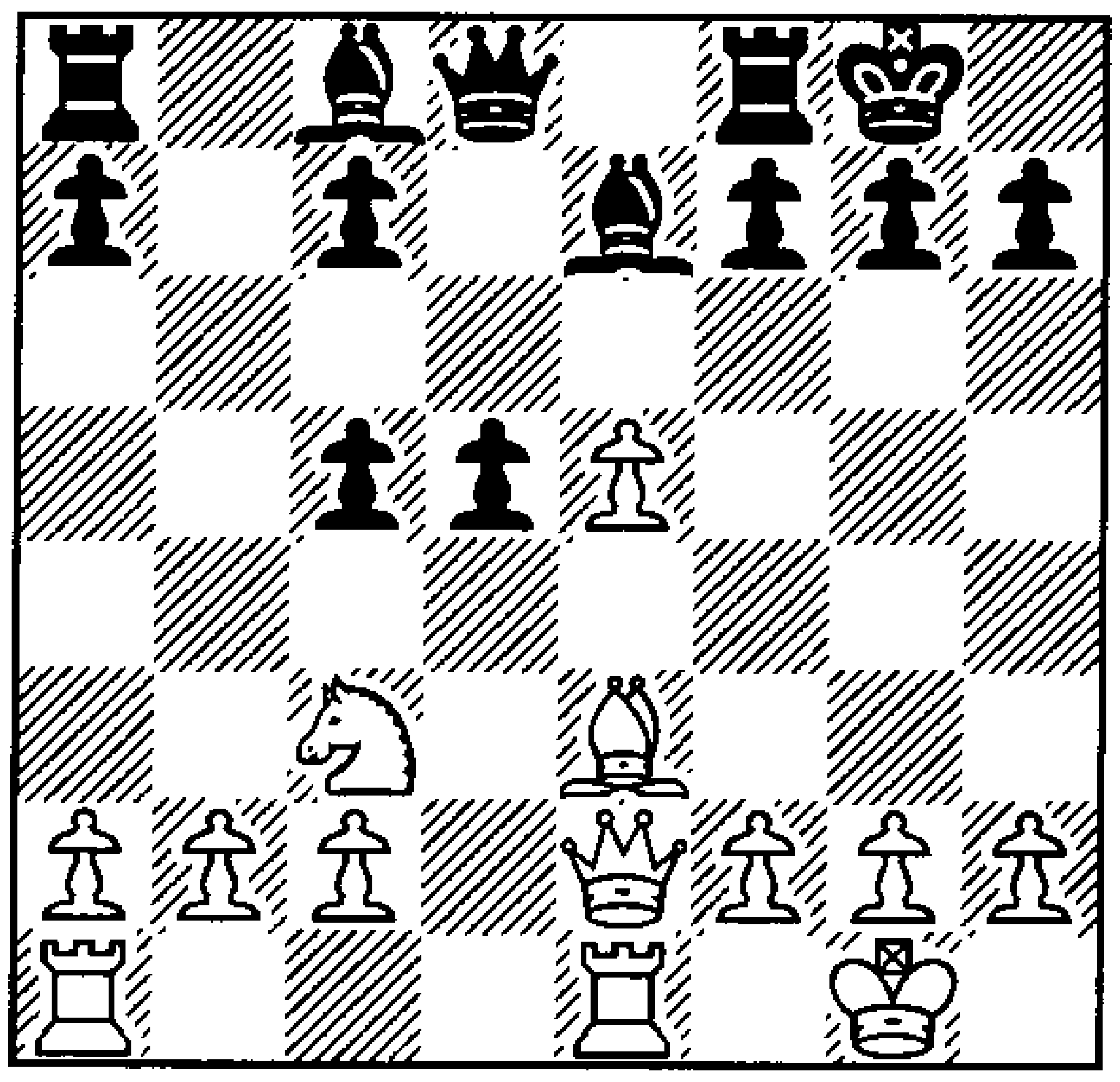
13 ♗xd4 c5!

In the given situation 13...d5?! (13...f6?! 14 ♖ad1 also failed to establish itself, Zukertort-Winawer, London 1883) is much weaker because of 14 ♘a4! ♗b4 15 c3 ♗a5 16 ♕h5 ♗b6 17 ♖e3 ♗e6 18 ♖g3 ♔h8 19 ♖d1 ♕e7 20 b4 with a solid blockade of the c5-square

(Pillsbury-Tarrasch, Vienna 2nd matchgame 1898).

'The move in the game is the start of the Vianna variation, named the "Rio de Janeiro Variation" after the player's home.' (Keres) A year before the match, Teichmann brought the 'Brazilian' idea 13...c5! from a tour of South America. As Lasker wrote, 'this defence has come into theory, to settle there for a long time.'

14 ♗e3 d5



15 exd6 ♗xd6 (of course, not 15...cxd6? 16 ♗xc5) **16 ♘e4!**

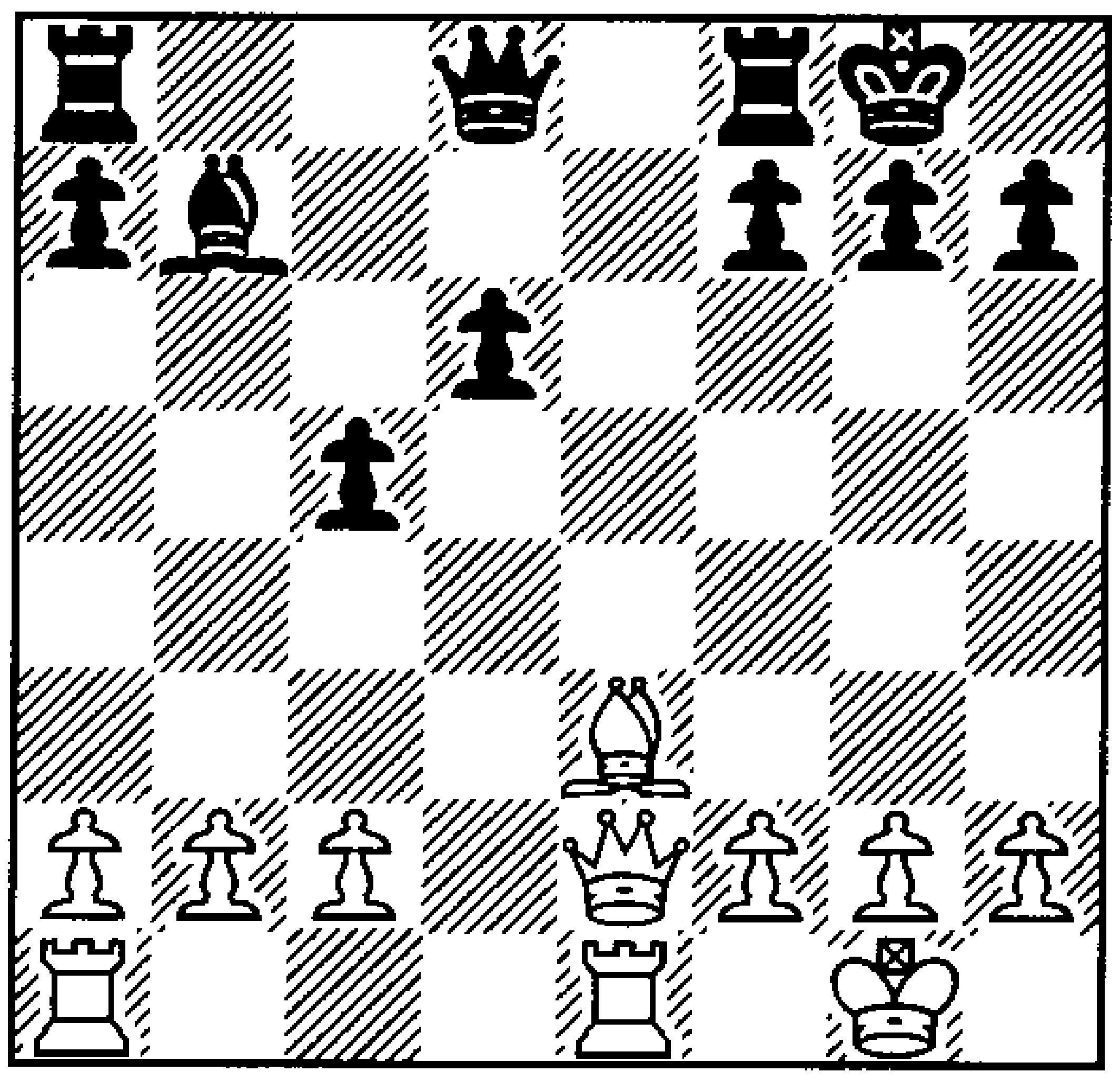
Probably the strongest. The eighth game went 16 ♕h5 ♗b7 17 ♖ad1 (17 ♗xc5? g6) 17...♖e8 18 ♘b5 (18 f3 is slightly better) 18...♕f6 19 ♘xd6 cxd6 20 ♗c1 ♖e6 with level chances.

In the 14th game Tarrasch tried 16 ♖ad1 and after 16...♕h4?! 17 h3 ♕b4 18 ♗c1 he gained an advantage, but correct is 16...♗b7! (16...♕f6!? 17 ♕h5 ♖b8 18 ♗c1 ♕f5 equalises, Capablanca-Réti, Vienna 1914) 17 ♗f4 (17 ♗xc5? ♕g5) 17...♖e8 with equality, for example: 18 ♕xe8+ ♕xe8 19 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 20 ♗xd6 cxd6 21 f3 ♖e6 22 ♔f2 ♗c6 23 ♘d5 ♔f8 24 ♘e3 g6 25 c4 ♔e7 26 ♖d3 a5 27 ♖a3 a4 28 ♘d1 g5! 29 ♘c3 ♖h6 30 ♘xa4 ♖xh2 when the draw is not far off.

16...♗b7

'But not 16...♗xh2+ 17 ♔xh2 ♕h4+ 18 ♔g1 ♕xe4 19 ♗xc5 ♕xe2 20 ♖xe2 with clearly the better endgame for White.' (Keres) But in my opinion, after 20...♗a6! (20...♖d8?! 21 ♖e7!) this statement demands proof: 21 ♖e7 (21 ♖d2!?) 21...♖fc8 22 ♖ae1 ♗c4 23 ♗xa7 (23 b3 ♗e6) 23...h6! is equal (Vukic recommended 23...♗xa2? 24 b3 ♗b1, but after 25 ♖xb1 ♖xa7 26 ♖d1 Black can resign).

17 ♘xd6!? (White gets rid of the dangerous bishop, not worrying about the resulting opposite-colour bishops) **17...cxd6**



18 c4

A new move – fixing the backward d6-pawn. In the source game Marco-Teichmann (Ostend II 1907) after 18 ♗f4 d5 19 ♕b5 ♕b6 20 ♕xb6 axb6 21 ♗c7 b5 things ended in a draw.

Out of recent attempts I should mention 18 ♖ad1 ♕f6 19 f3!? (Tseshkovsky-Ivkov, Bled/Portoroz 1979) and 18 ♕g4 ♕f6 19 ♕g5!? ♕g6 20 ♕xg6 hxg6 21 ♖ad1 ♖fd8 22 f3 with a small plus in the ending (Tseshkovsky-Hort, Petrosian Memorial, Moscow 1999).

18...♕f6

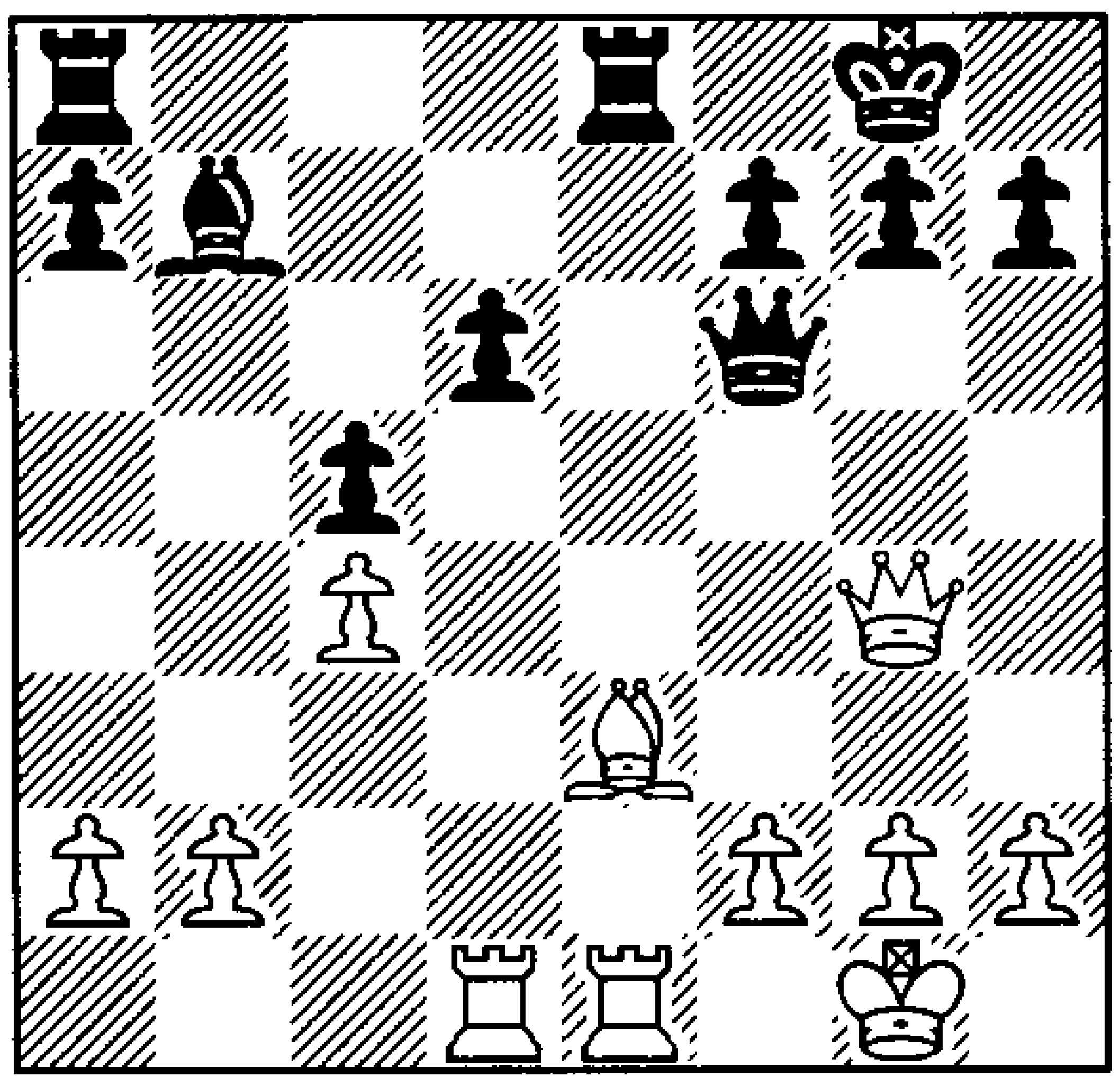
Also possible is 18...♖e8 19 f3 (19 ♖ad1 ♖e6) 19...♕h4 20 b3 ♖e6 21 ♕d2 ♖g6 22 ♗f4 ♕f6 23 ♕e3 h5!? 24 ♖ad1 ♖d8 25 ♖d3 h4 26 ♖ed1 h3 with counterplay (Selesnieff-Réti, Berlin 1919).

19 ♖ad1 ♖fe8

Eighty years later 19...♖ae8 20 f3 ♖e6 21 ♕f2 ♖fe8 22 b3 h6 with equal chances was also played.

20 ♕g4!

Precise calculation. The problem of defending with Black in such 'dull' positions is that to maintain the balance he all the time has to find virtually the only moves. And Lasker is unable to withstand the tension...



20...♗c6?

In Tarrasch's opinion, the decisive mistake. Also bad is 20...♕xb2? 21 ♖b1 ♕c3 (or 21...♖xe3 22 fxe3 ♕c3 23 ♖e2) 22 ♖ec1 ♗c8 (if 22...♕a3 there follows not 23 ♖xb7? ♕xc1+, but 23 ♗h6! g6 24 ♕f4 with the threats of ♕f6 and ♖xb7) 23 ♕f3 ♖b8! 24 ♕c6! ♖xe3 25 ♕xd6! and wins.

Of course, 20...♖e6! should have been played. 'In this case White's position is also better in view of the unpleasant weakness of the black d6-pawn, but with correct defence Black should nevertheless be able to gain a draw thanks to the opposite-coloured bishops.' (Keres) In my opinion, this is not hard to do, for example: 21 ♗f4 (21 ♖e2?! ♖ae8 22 ♖ed2? ♕e5! or 22 ♕g3 ♕g6!; 21 b3 ♖ae8 22 ♕g3 h6 is equal) 21...♖ae8 22 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 23 h4 (23 b3? ♕e7!) 23...h6 or 21 ♕f4 ♕g6 22 f3 ♖ae8 23 ♗f2 ♖xe1+ 24 ♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 25 ♗xe1 ♕d3 26 ♗c3 f6 with equal chances in each case.

21 ♖e2!

After this move Lasker thought for almost a whole hour...

21...♖e4?

Not without reason do they say that mistakes comes in pairs. 21...♖e6? no longer worked because of 22 ♗g5, but better, nevertheless, was Vukic's recommendation 21...h6!? 22 ♖ed2 ♖ad8 23 ♕g3 (23 ♕f4 ♕xf4 24 ♗xf4 ♖e6 is equal) 23...♖e6 24 h4 (24 ♗xc5? ♕f5 and ...♖g6) 24...♕e7 25 h5 ♔h8, 'and Black's defences hold: 26 ♗xc5? ♖e1+ (*let us continue: 27 ♔h2 ♖xd1 28 ♗d4 f6 29 ♖xd1 ♕e2 30 ♖c1 ♕xh5+ 31 ♔g1 with equal chances – G. K.*), or 26 ♗f4 d5 27 cxd5 ♗xd5 28 ♖xd5? ♖e1+!' (Neishtadt) However, after 28 ♗e3 White has a clear advantage, and so instead of 27...♗xd5? correct is 27...♖e1+ 28 ♖xe1 ♕xe1+ 29 ♔h2 ♖xd5 30 ♖xd5 ♗xd5.

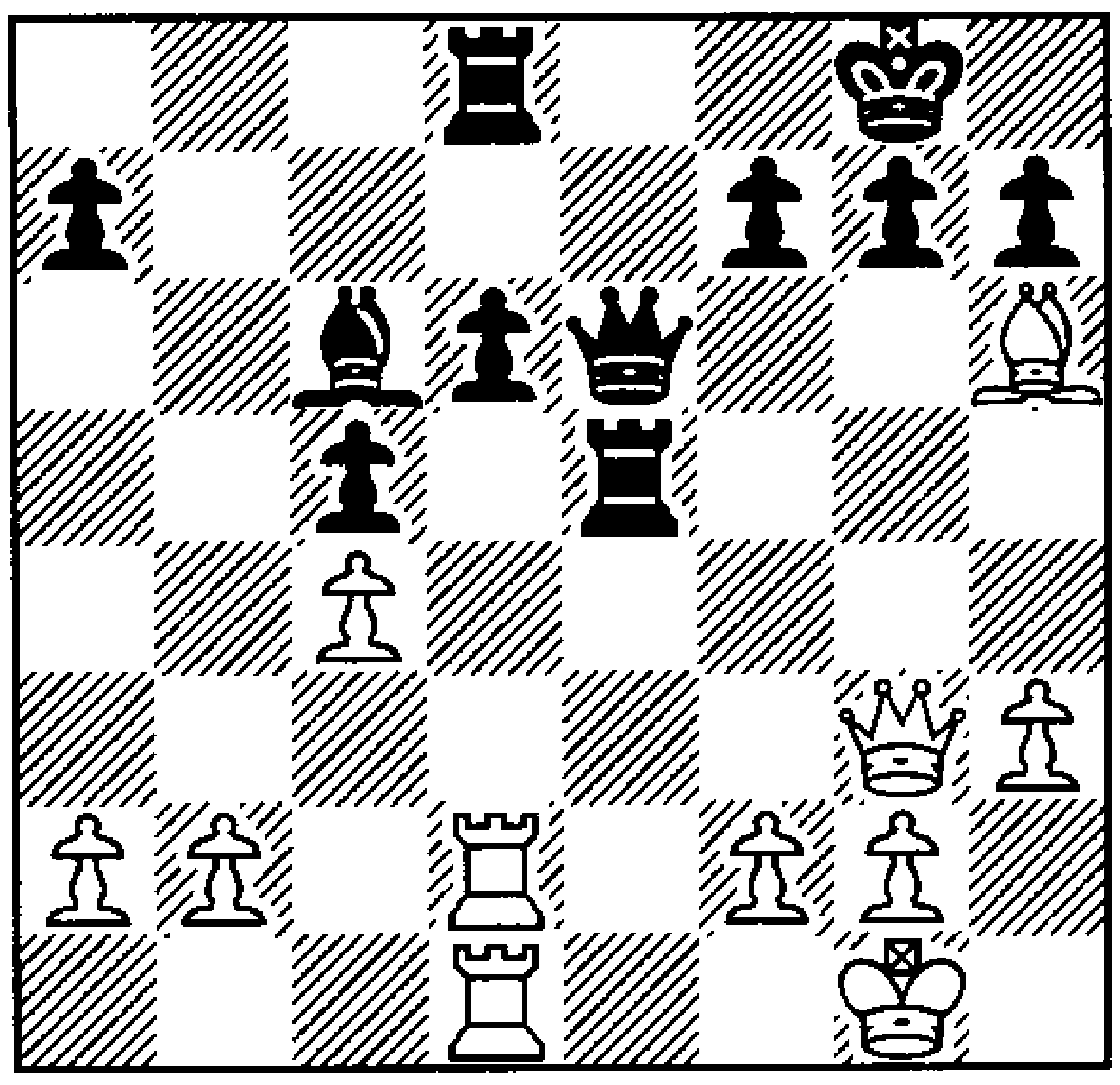
22 ♕g3 ♕e6

If 22...♖xc4, then 23 ♖xd6 ♖d8 24 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 25 h3! with the threats of ♖d2 and ♗h6.

23 h3!

'Possible was 23 ♖xd6 (23 ♕xd6?! ♖g4!) 23...♕xc4 24 ♖ed2 with the initiative, since here 24...♖g4? does not work in view of 25 ♖d8+ ♗e8 26 ♕xg4! ♕xg4 27 ♖xa8.' (Neishtadt) But after 24...♕xa2 25 h3 ♖e6 things are not so clear.

23...♖d8 (Schlechter proposed 23...♕xc4 24 ♗h6 g6 25 ♖xe4 ♕xe4, but after 26 ♖xd6 White is threatening ♖xc6!, and if 26...♖e8, then 27 ♔h2 with the threat of f2-f3) **24 ♖ed2 ♖e5 25 ♗h6!**



25...♕g6?

Of course, 25...♕xh6? 26 ♕xe5 was bad for Black, but he could have prolonged the resistance by 25...g6 26 ♗f4 ♖e1+ 27 ♖xe1

♕xe1+ 28 ♔h2 etc. Now, however, almost as in draughts, one after another Black loses his d6- and c5-pawns.

26 ♗f4! ♖e6 27 ♗xd6 ♕h5 (Tarrasch considered 27...h5 to be somewhat more tenacious) **28 ♕g4**

But not 28 ♗e5?? ♕xd1+! 29 ♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 30 ♔h2 ♖g6 and Black wins.

28...♕xg4 29 hxg4 ♖e4 30 ♗xc5 ♖xd2 31 ♖xd2 h5 32 ♖d6 1-0

'The result of this game again inspired me,' Tarrasch declared and... he ignominiously lost the next, 11th game. But then he won the 12th, and in a titanic struggle! The score became 6-3 (=3). Somewhat shaken, Lasker took a four-day break...

In his report on the game he had just lost (both players covered the match in the press) the world champion wrote that he 'intends to explain his defeats, present them in the correct light and... philosophise on their causes (shades of the Steinitz-Chigorin School!). And indeed he gave a detailed psychological analysis of the struggle, explaining why the win for his opponent, who repulsed a seemingly dangerous attack, was justified: 'He parried a desperate attack very skilfully and found a saving idea... Chess is just. He who plays correctly and seeks, he will always find. Perhaps this is the most splendid thing in our ancient strategic game.'

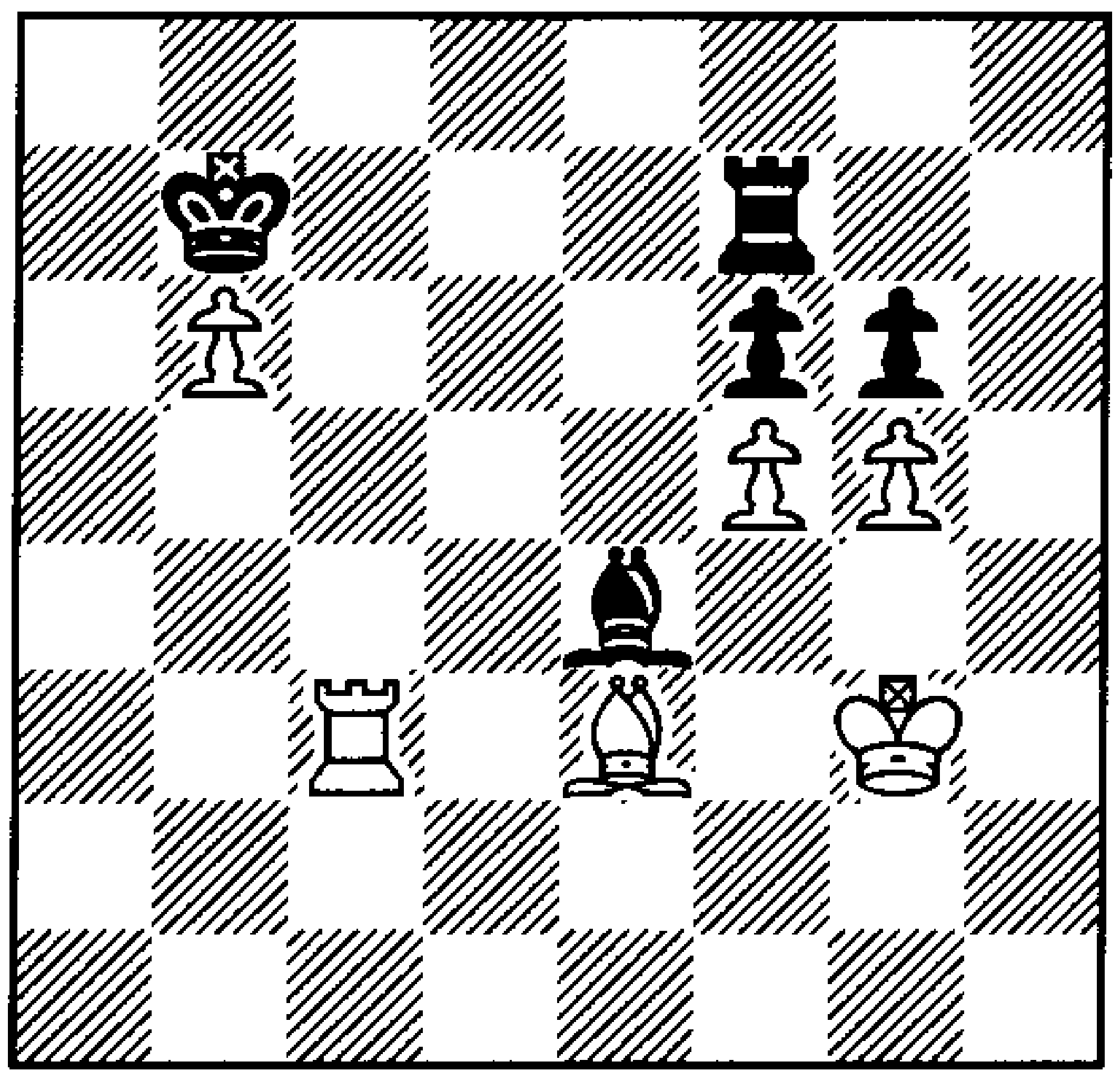
The resumption of play showed that Tarrasch's powers were already on the wane. In the 13th game the champion chose **1 d4** for the first time in the match, and the challenger replied with the defence that bears his name – **1...d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5**. By the 20th move Black had a splendid attacking position, when suddenly he removed a knight from the centre and his position became almost hopeless. Lasker converted his advantage and took the score to 7-3. 'Now, when my opponent only had to win a single game more,' wrote Tarrasch, 'I played as though a Sword of Damocles was raised above my head.'

Nevertheless the 14th game was the most protracted in all of Lasker's match experience: obtaining an endgame with an extra pawn, Tarrasch tormented his opponent for three days and 119 moves! There was a moment when in a sharp time scramble Lasker made a couple of errors and was a step away from defeat.

Game 56

S.Tarrasch-Em.Lasker

World Championship Match,
Düsseldorf/Munich 1908, 14th game



60 gxf6?

The ill-starred last move before the time control! '60 ♖a3 would have won quickly, for example: 60...♔c6 61 ♖a7 ♖f8 (61...♖xa7 62 bxa7 ♔b7 63 gxf6 ♗d5 64 fxg6 or 62...♔d7 63 fxg6 ♔e7 64 g7) 62 ♖c7+ ♔b5 63 ♗c5 ♖g8 64 gxf6; 60...♔b8 61 ♖a7 ♖f8 (or 61...♗b7 62 fxg6 ♖g7 63 ♗d4 ♖xg6 64 ♗xf6) 62 gxf6 ♖xf6 63 ♗f4+ ♔c8 64 ♖c7+ ♔d8 65 ♗g5; 60...♔c8 61 fxg6 ♗xg6 62 ♖a8+ ♔b7 63 ♖a7+ ♔c6 64 ♖xf7 ♗xf7 65 gxf6. The continuation chosen by me led to the win of the bishop, but not the game.' (Tarrasch)

60...♖xf6 61 ♖c7+ ♔a6 62 ♖a7+ ♔b5 63 b7 ♗xb7 64 ♖xb7+ ♔c4 65 ♔f4 gxf5 66 ♔e5 ♖f8 and Black gained a draw.

After this there followed a nervy draw in the 15th game, and then a terrible time-trouble blunder by the challenger in the 16th – and the match ended in a convincing win for Lasker: +8 -3 =5.

Tarrasch was thus unable to find the key to his amazingly resourceful opponent. In particular he was ruined by his straightforward adherence to the theory of 'correct moves', without taking account of psychological factors. In searching for the ephemeral absolute truth he went too far, lost control over the situation and, to put it simply, made more mistakes than his opponent.

It is a pity that their match did not take place 10-15 years earlier... The failure of the 46-year-old Tarrasch was neatly described by the remarkable chess author and master Eugene Znosko-Borovsky: 'Intellect, erudition, technique, talent – all that fate extravagantly bestowed on him, proved insufficient in a meeting with the inner force, the foreseeing intuition, the originality of a genius.'

A Tough Nut

Other possible contenders for the throne at that time were two prominent positional players, the Hungarian Géza Maróczy (1870-1951) and the Austrian Karl Schlechter. But whereas the first of these did not manage to arrange a match with the champion, the second, the victor of Ostend 1906, who played successfully in 1908 in the major tournaments in Vienna and Prague (with an overall score of +18 -1 =19), immediately issued a challenge to Lasker, who in reply gave his agreement in principle. But first he had to play Tarrasch, and the Lasker-Schlechter match was deferred until January 1910.

During this time a number of interesting events occurred, the main one being the Chigorin Memorial, the highly important international tournament in St Petersburg (February 1909). Schlechter was paired with White against Lasker in the very first round, and was completely outplayed by his formidable opponent (in the same Steinitz Defence to the Ruy Lopez). Apparently the only thing that saved the challenger was the fact that the champion was out of practice...

However, Lasker ultimately found his earlier form, which is not something that can be said about Schlechter, if one only looks at the results of the St Petersburg tournament: 1-2. Lasker and Rubinstein – 14½ out of 18(!); 3-4. Duras and Spielmann – 11; 5. Bernstein – 10½; 6. Teichmann – 10; 7. Perlis – 9½; 8-10. E. Cohn, Salwe and Schlechter 9 etc. This poor showing by the challenger displeased the champion, who declared that their match was unlikely to be of interest to the chess world. However, later Lasker admitted that Schlechter's failure had been caused by his illness during the tournament, and he spoke highly of the mastery of his future opponent.

In Paris that same autumn, Lasker crushed Janowski in a series of 10 'training' games (+7 -1 =2), since the Franco-Russian master had found a rich patron, the artist Leo Nardus, who invested 6,000 Francs in this venture.

It was proposed that the Lasker-Schlechter match (Vienna/Berlin 1910) would be the best of 30 games, but due to financial problems the number of games was reduced to 10 – an unprecedented occurrence! Also for the first time the full text of the match agreement was not published. Only a few of its points were leaked to the press: the prize fund – 3,000 Krona from Vienna and 2,000 Marks from Berlin; the time control – an hour for 15 moves with an interval every two hours... However, to all appearances, one of the points stated that to win the title the challenger had to gain an advantage of two points, and that if Schlechter were to win by one point (5½-4½) the match would be declared... drawn.

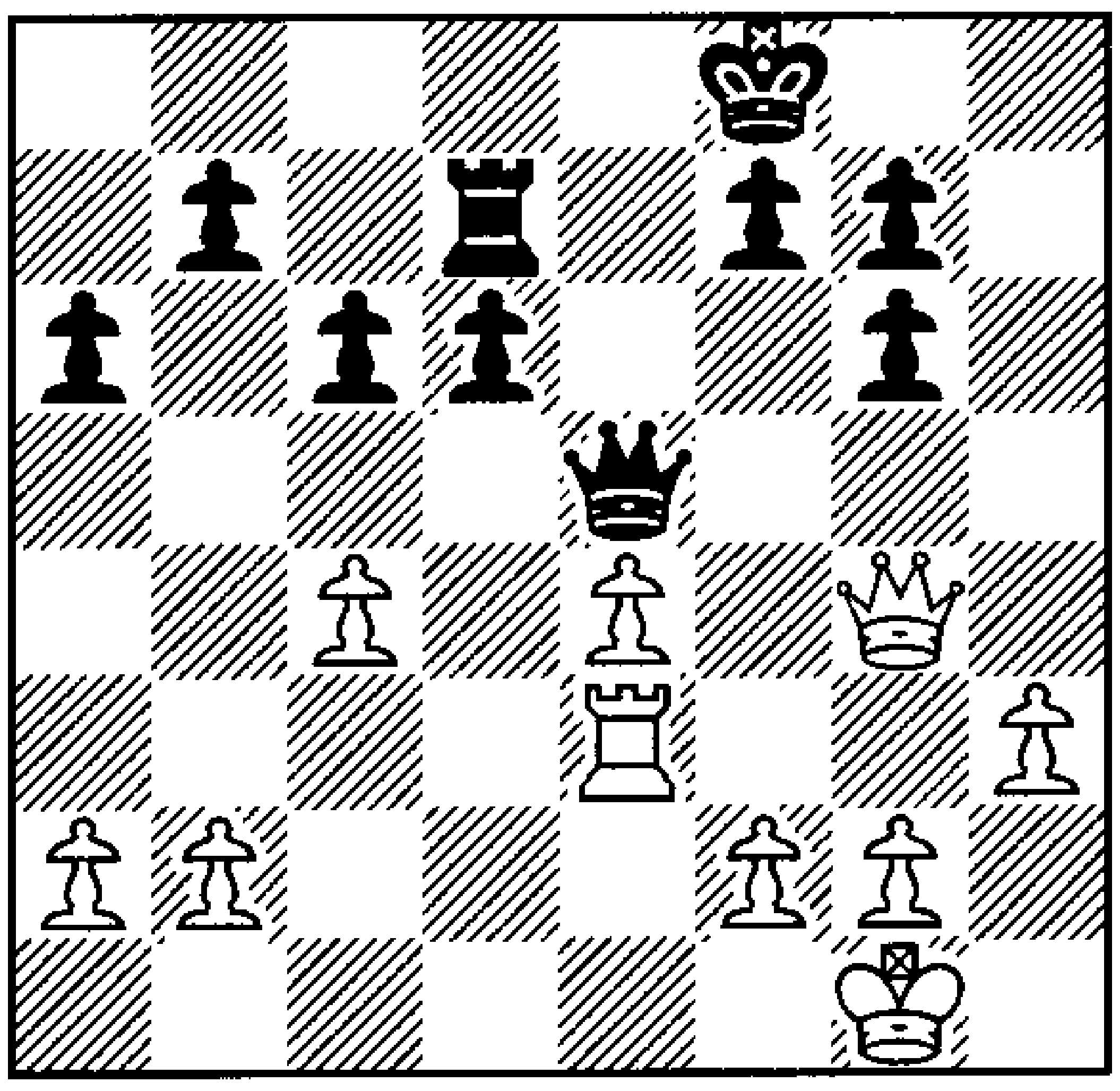
This was a very difficult match for Lasker! Already in the first game he only just escaped in a rook ending where he was two pawns down, and in the second, after a mistake in the opening, he was obliged to gain a draw by finding the only moves. And although the champion then dominated in most of the games, Schlechter proved to be a tough nut to crack: an outstanding follower of the Steinitz School and an expert on the openings, he played with unusual tenacity, not succumbing to psychological tricks, and he was very hard to break down. Later Botvinnik explained this by the fact that 'to some extent Schlechter's play was faceless, and Lasker had nothing to hook on to.'

The first game to finish decisively, after four draws at the start, was the fifth. From the opening (once again a Steinitz Defence in the 'Spanish') a dead drawn position was reached, but Lasker began playing for a win with Black, devising an amazing manoeuvre of his king to the queenside. His opponent was completely outplayed, but in time-trouble the picture suddenly changed...

Game 57

K.Schlechter-Em.Lasker

World Championship Match,
Vienna/Berlin 1910, 5th game



27...♔e8!?

'Black fearlessly sends off his king on a Steinitz-like journey.' (*Krefelder Zeitung* 13 February 1910) What self-belief and imagination he needed to have!

28 ♕e2 ♔d8 29 ♕d2 ♔c7 30 a3 (30 a4!?) **30...♖e7 31 b4**

Here 31 a4 was more circumspect. 'White begins something resembling a pawn storm, intending to create some threats to the black king. Lasker boldly accepts the challenge.' (Romanovsky)

31...b5!

An excellent sealed move! 'Played fearlessly and energetically, as befits a great master. Although in the process the king's position is exposed, the white a3-pawn becomes backward. And Black hopes to create a passed pawn, by subsequently advancing his c-pawn.' (Tarrasch) After the adjournment there followed:

32 cxb5

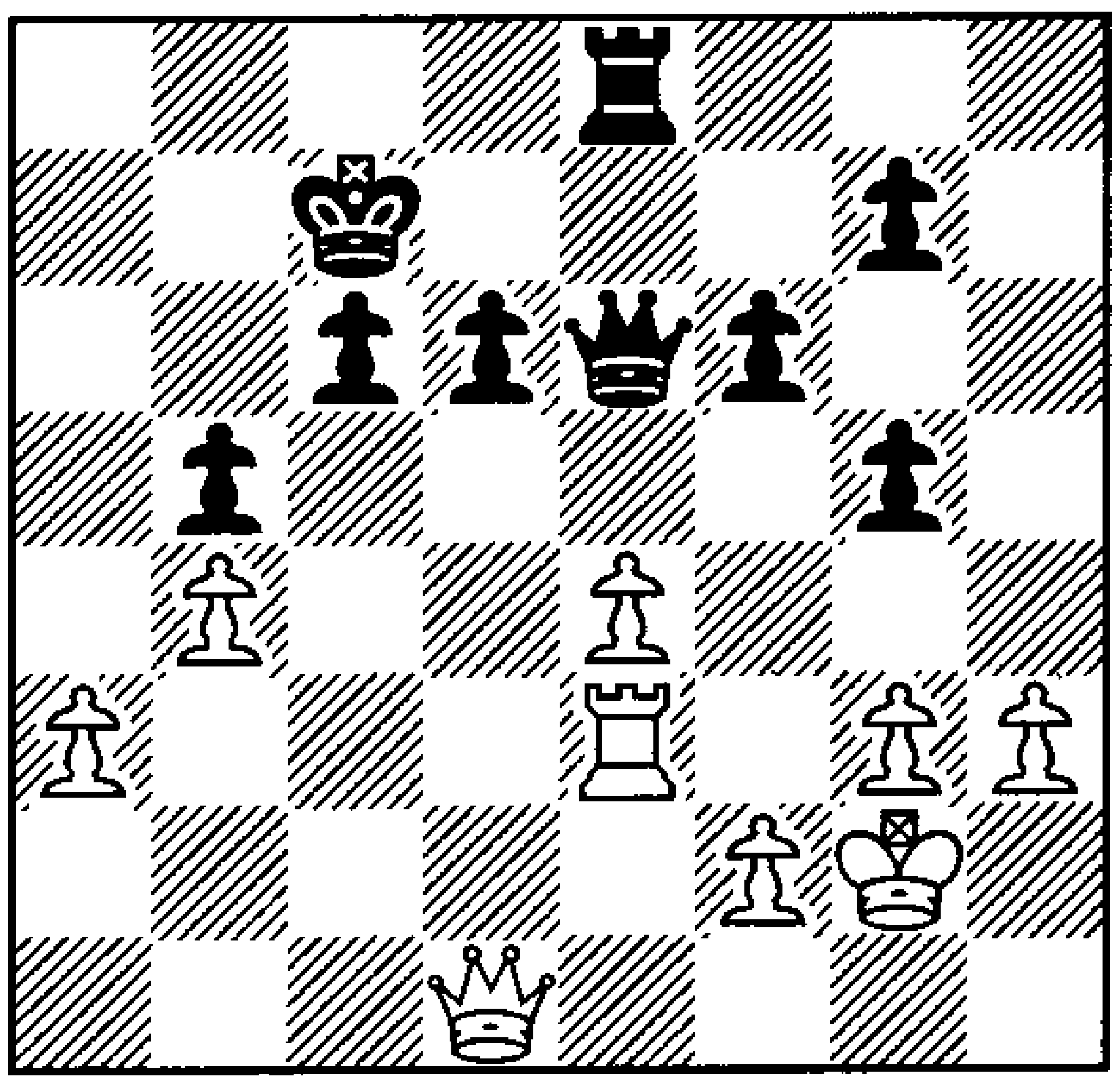
If 32 ♕d3, then 32...♕a1+ 33 ♔h2 g5 is good, while Romanovsky gives 33...♕a2!? 34 c5 dxc5 35 bxc5 ♖d7 36 ♕c3 ♕d2! 37 ♕e5+ ♔b7 'with real winning chances'.

32...axb5 33 g3 g5 34 ♔g2 ♖e8 35 ♕d1 f6! (not fearing a3-a4) **36 ♕b3**

A cautious line. Lipke and Tarrasch recommended 36 a4, but here too after 36...bxa4 37 ♕xa4 ♔b7 38 ♕c2 (but not 38 ♖a3? ♕xe4+ 39 ♔h2 ♕d4! 40 ♕a6+ ♔c7 41 ♕a7+ ♕xa7 42 ♖xa7+ ♔b6 43 ♖xg7 ♖e4 and wins – Romanovsky) 38...♖a8 or 38...♕e6 Black retains the advantage.

36...♕e6 37 ♕d1

37 ♕xe6 ♖xe6 is too depressing for White. 'In view of the weakness of the a3-pawn and the possibility of ...c6-c5, the rook ending is quite unacceptable for him.' (Romanovsky)



37...♖h8! (provoking a new weakening, since 38 ♕g4?! is unfavourable) **38 g4 ♕c4**

'A presumptuous queen invasion. 38...♖a8 should definitely have been played, suppressing White's main, and perhaps his only chance: a3-a4.' (Romanovsky) But perhaps Lasker simply did not consider it necessary to prevent his opponent's dubious counterplay?

39 a4?!

On encountering difficulties, the challenger begins throwing caution to the wind. 'A pawn sacrifice offering good chances; after 39 ♕f3 ♖e8 40 ♕f5 ♖e5 41 ♕h7 ♕f7 or 41 ♕g6 ♕g8 White would have had a difficult game.' (Schlechter) However, more solid was 39 ♕d2!? ♖a8 40 f3 ♕e6 41 ♕c2 ♕e5 42 ♖c3 ♖a6 43 ♕b3 with a defensible position.

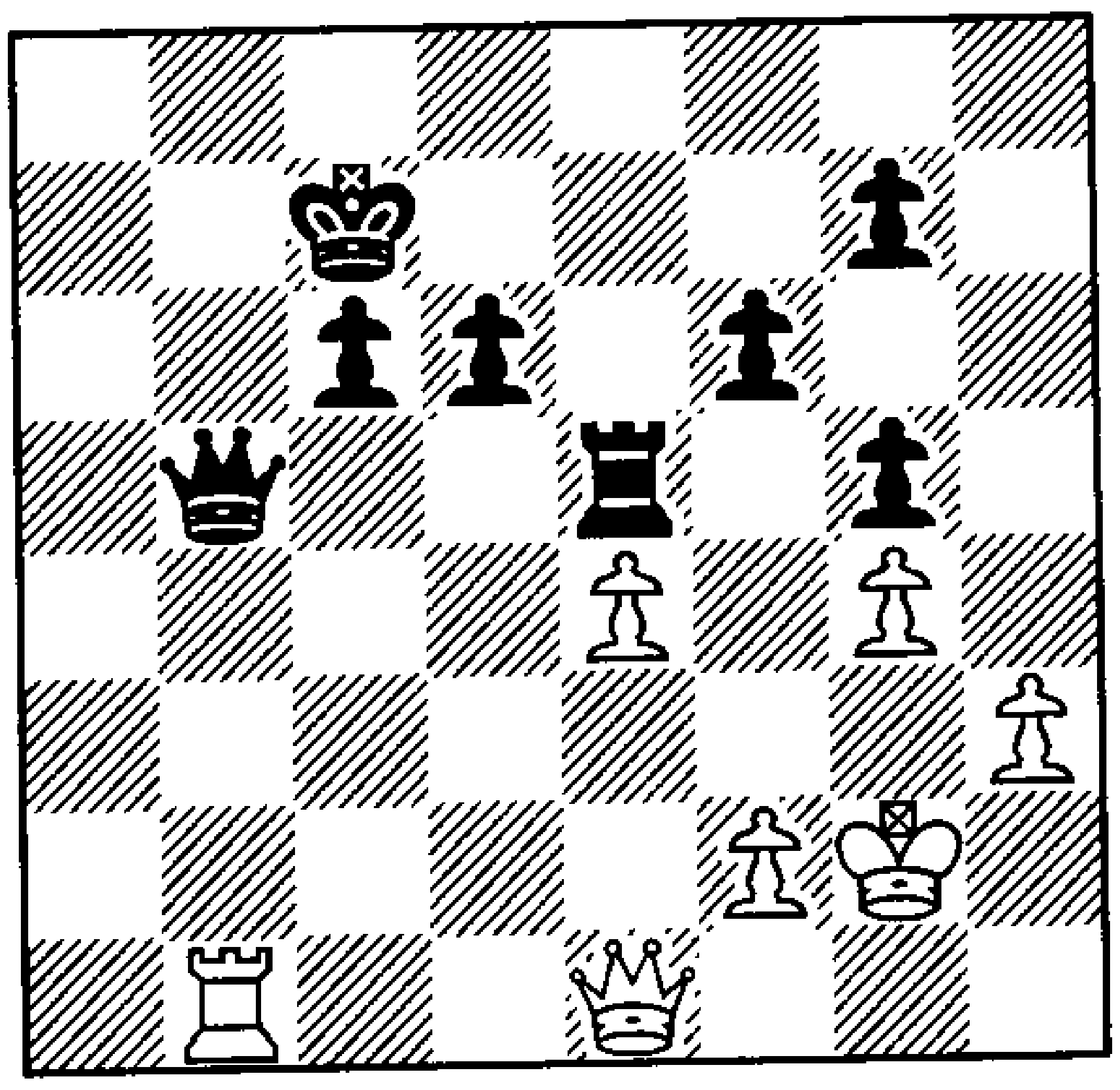
39...♕xb4

If 39...bxa4 40 ♕xa4 ♖b8 (Capablanca), then 41 ♕a5+ ♔c8 42 ♕a7 ♖b7 43 ♕a8+ ♖b8 44 ♕a7 with a repetition. 39...♖b8!? is more interesting – after 40 axb5 ♖xb5 41 ♕a4 ♔b7! (41...♕xb4 42 ♕a7+ ♖b7 43 ♕a2 is not altogether clear) White also loses a pawn without any particular compensation: 42 ♕d1 ♕xb4 or 42 ♔f3 ♖xb4 43 ♕a5 g6 etc. 'No worse was 39...♖a8 40 axb5 ♕xb5 41 ♕b3 ♖a1! 42 ♖d3 ♔b6, and if 43 ♖xd6?, then 43...♕f1+ 44 ♔g3 ♕g1+ and wins.' (Romanovsky)

40 axb5 ♕xb5 41 ♖b3 ♕a6 42 ♕d4 ♖e8

Preventing ♕b2 and ♖a3, but more importantly – centralising the rook.

43 ♖b1 ♖e5! 44 ♕b4 ♕b5 (but not 44...♖b5? 45 ♕c4!; now, however, White is simply a pawn down) **45 ♕e1**

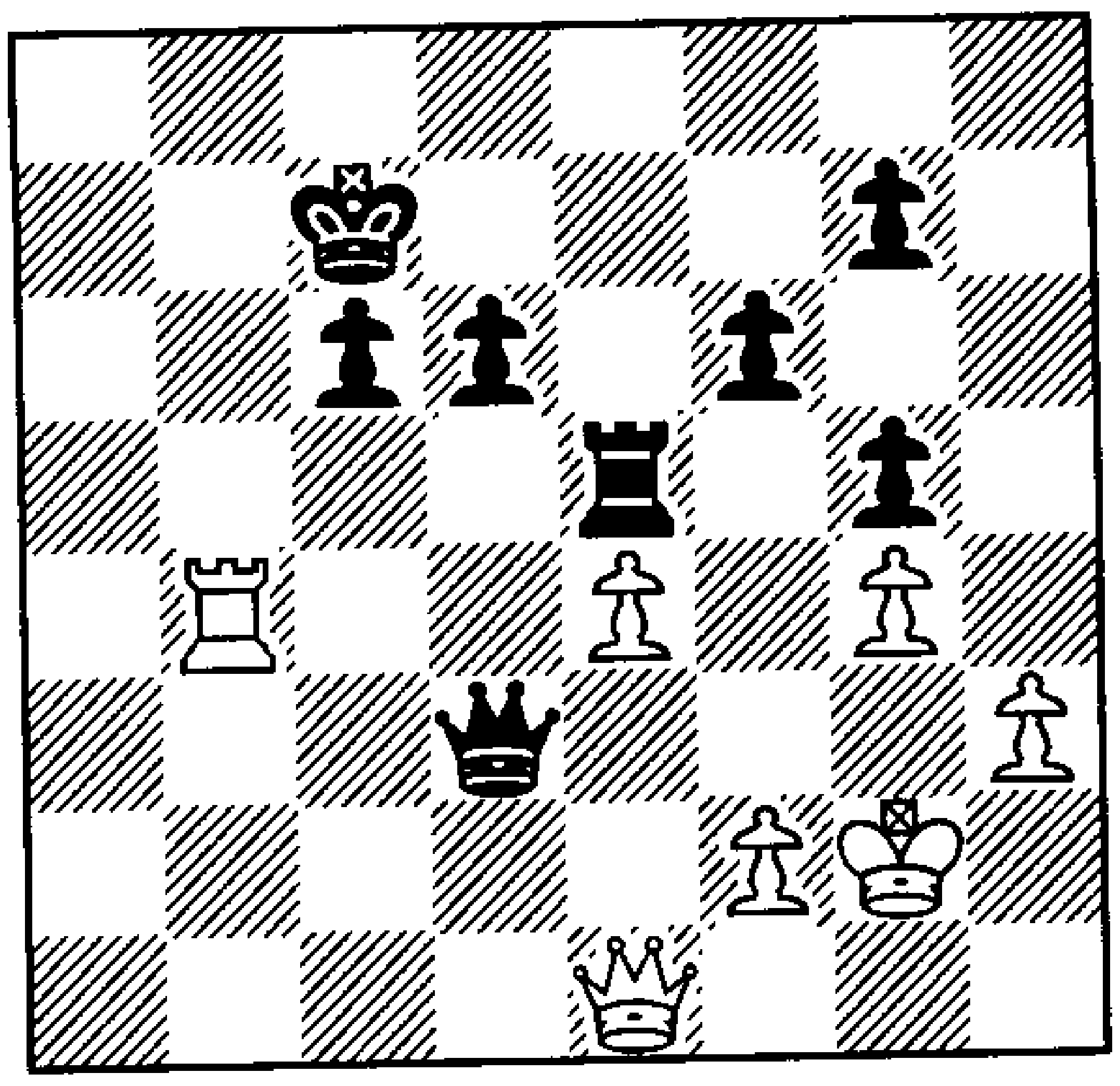


45...♕d3?!

A moment that is not mentioned by any of the commentators: more accurate was 45...♕a4! with an obvious advantage. After 46 ♖b4 (or 46 f3 ♖b5) 46...♕a5! 47 ♕b1 ♖b5 48 ♖xb5 ♕xb5 Black has a technically won position.

46 ♖b4!

'Not only defending, but also threatening the strong attacking manoeuvre ♕a1. White has acquired real threats against the king.' (Romanovsky)

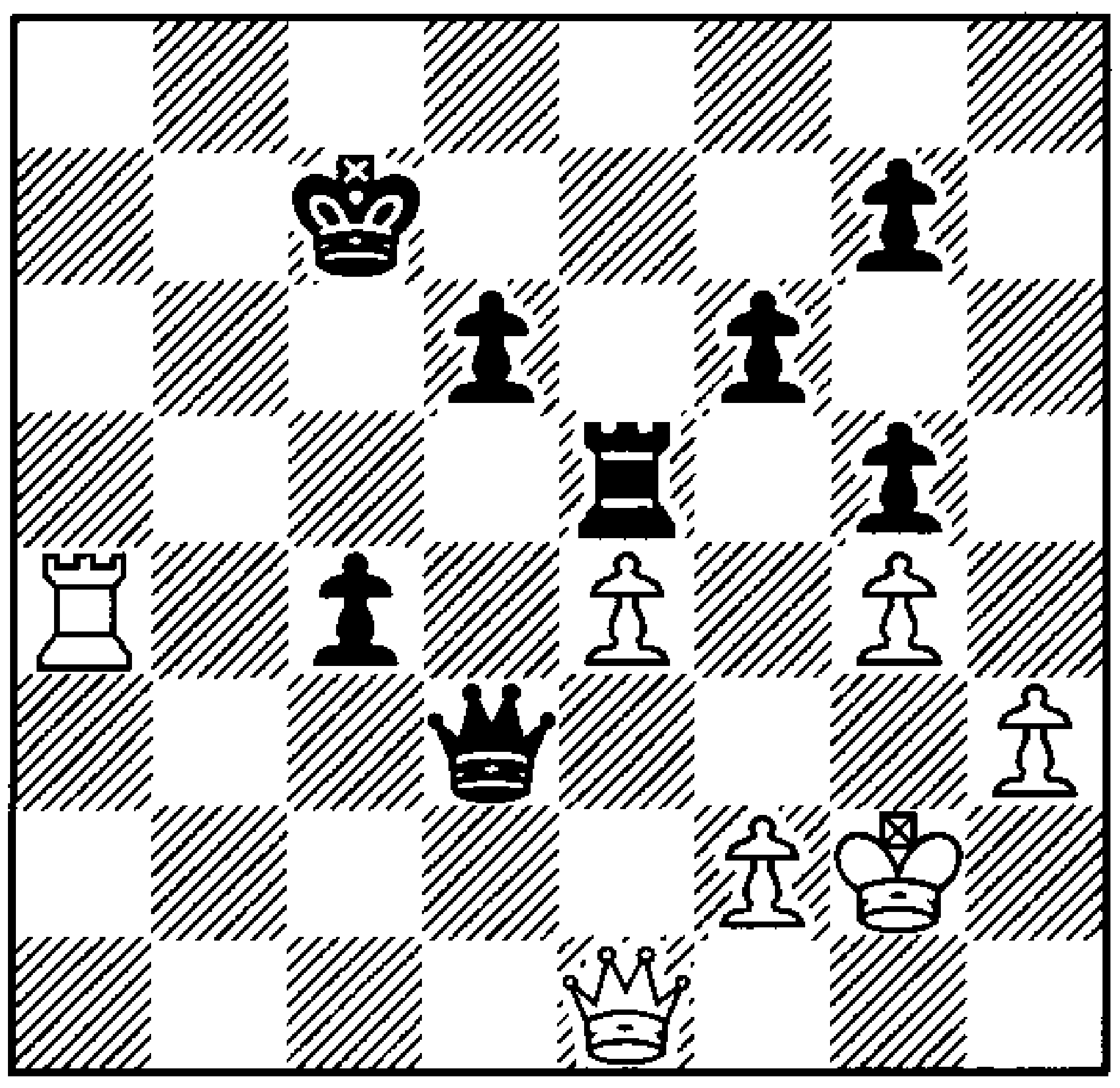


46...c5?!

Excessively sharp! Now White activates his queen and suddenly there are various checks and sacrifices in the air... Capablanca suggested 46...♖b5!? In Romanovsky's opinion, this move 'is parried by 47 ♖a4, and if 47...♖b1, then 48 ♕a5+ ♔d7 49 ♕f5+.' But after 47...♔d7! it is hard to offer White any good advice: 48 ♖a7+ ♔e6 etc.

'The commentators considered the best chance to be 46...♖a5 with the threat of ...♖a3. However, the queen endgame after 47 ♖b3 *(47 ♕c1 ♖a2!; 47 ♖b2 ♖a4! Bernstein)* 47...♕xb3 48 ♕xa5+ ♔b7 *(48...♕b6!? Schlechter)* 49 ♕d8 ♕e6 50 f3 d5 51 exd5 cxd5 52 ♕a5 ♕d7 53 ♕b4+ ♔c7 54 ♕d4 is not at all simple, and it is unclear whether Black can win it. Lasker was not sure about this...' (Romanovsky) But in my opinion 52...♕e2+! 53 ♔g3 (53 ♔g1 ♕xf3) 53...♕e5+ 54 ♔g2 d4 should win for Black.

47 ♖a4 c4 (47...♔d7 was interesting, but how could Black resist taking the e4-pawn?!)

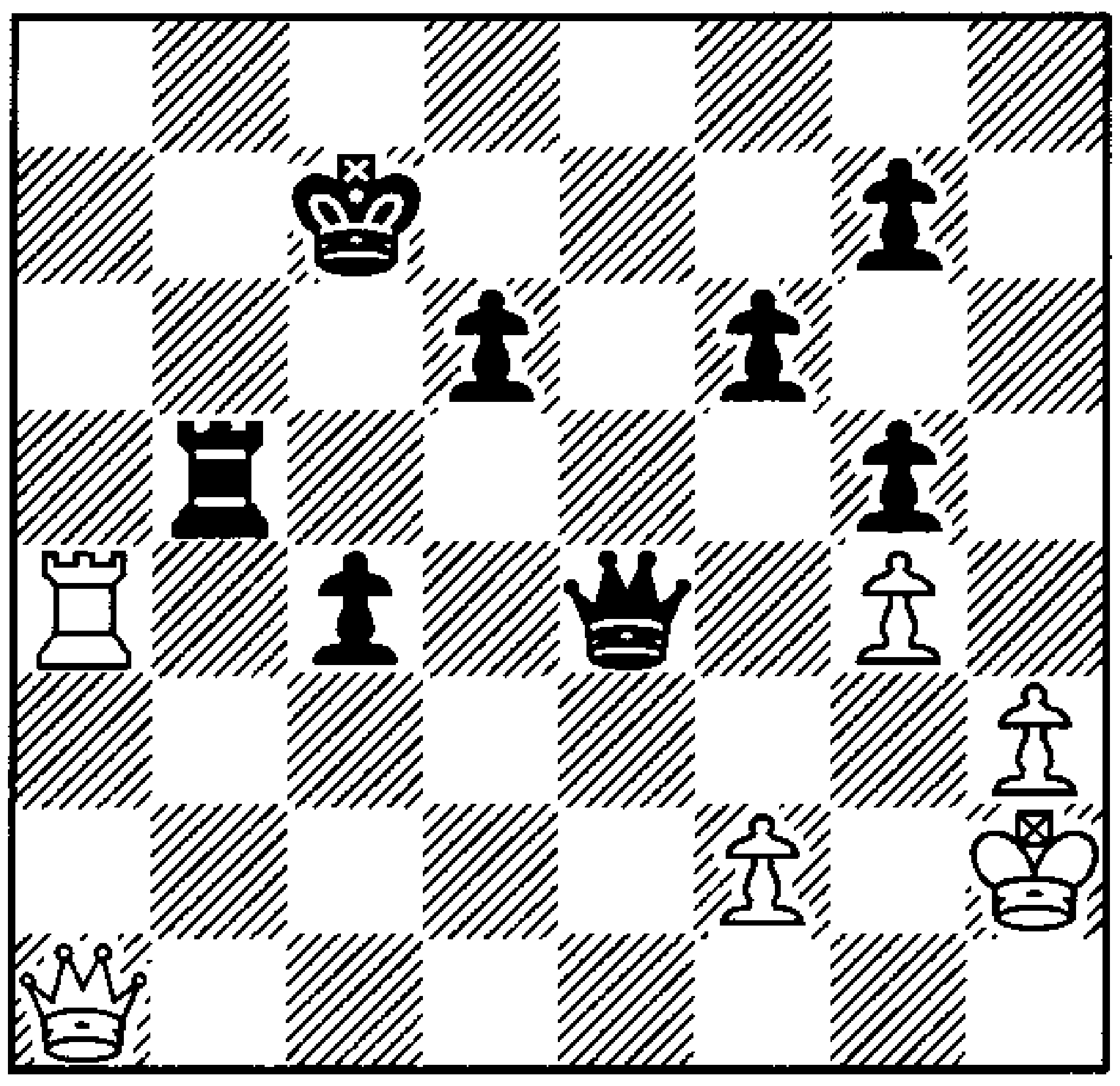


48 ♕a1

White could also have considered 48 ♕b4!? (48 f3?? ♕c2+ and ...♕xa4) 48...♕xe4+ 49 ♔g3 ♖c5 50 ♖a7+ ♔c8 51 ♖xg7 ♕f4+ 52 ♔g2 ♖c7 53 ♖g8+ with a sharp game, or 51...♕e5+ 52 ♔g2 ♕d5+ 53 ♔g1 ♖c7 54 ♖g6 c3 (54...♕f7 55 ♕b1) 55 ♖h6 c2 56 ♖h8+, saving himself by perpetual check.

48...♕xe4+ 49 ♔h2 ♖b5

Threatening to exchange queens, for example: 50 ♖a7+? ♔b8 51 ♖xg7 ♕e5+!



50 ♕a2!!

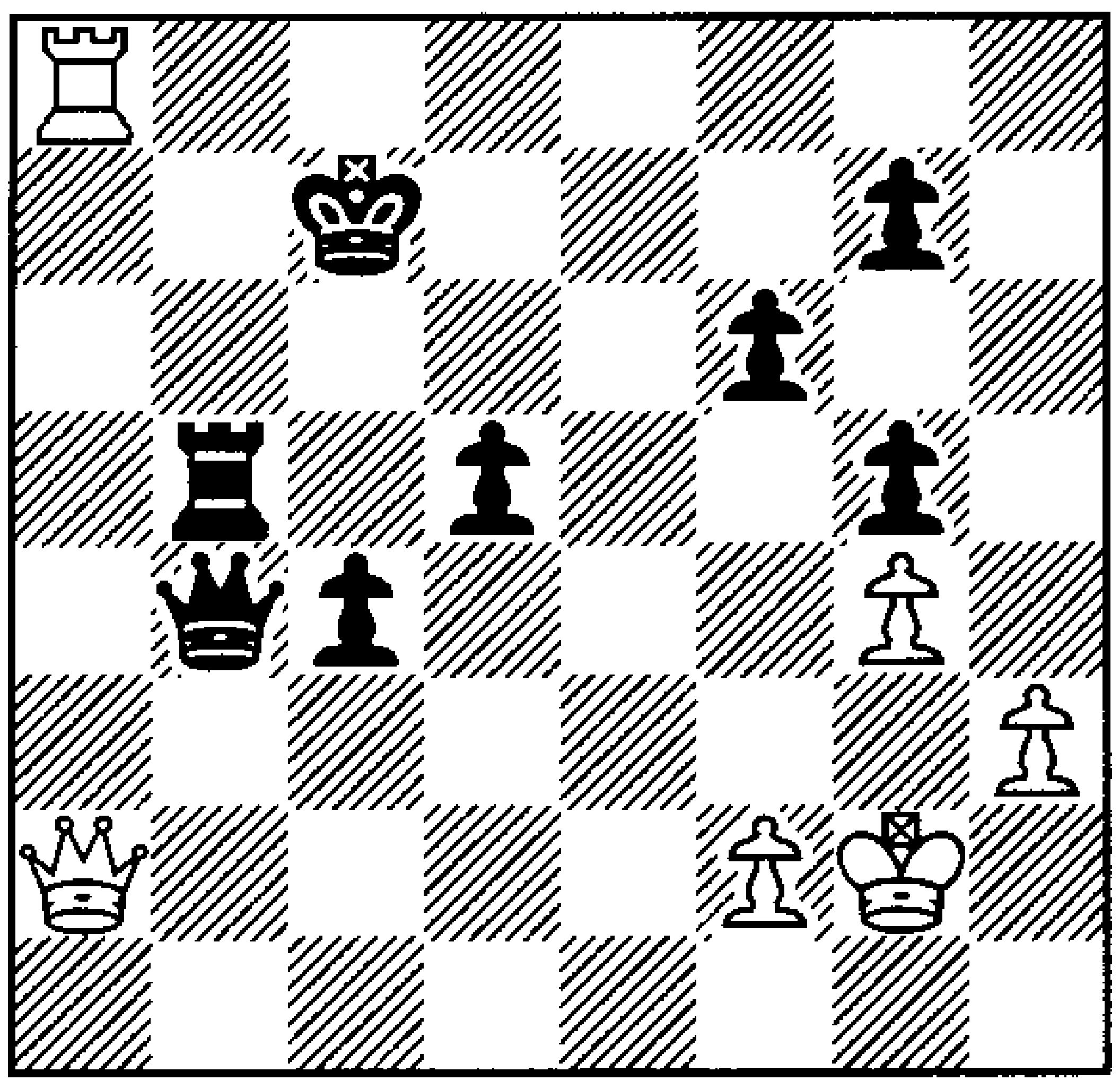
A unique resource! In a difficult position Schlechter shows incredible resourcefulness in seeking the slightest chances to sharpen the play – in which he succeeds. The threat is ♖xc4+ or ♖a7+ and ♖xg7.

50...♕e5+ 51 ♔g1 ♕e1+ 52 ♔h2 (52 ♔g2!?) **52...d5 53 ♖a8!** (with the threat of 54 ♕a7+ ♖b7 55 ♕c5) **53...♕b4**

53...♕e5+ did not promise anything more than a draw.

54 ♔g2

'Had his king already been at g2, White could have played 54 ♕a6, but here this is not possible in view of 54...♕d6+.' (Romanovsky)



The culmination of this fierce battle: White is two pawns down, but he has occupied the a-file and is threatening to invade with his queen at a6. It would appear that he is no longer losing!

54...♕c5?!

Dozens of question marks have been attached to this time-trouble move, and Schlechter called it 'the decisive mistake', but, as we will see, it is hard in general to call it a mistake. Let us consider Black's other possibilities:

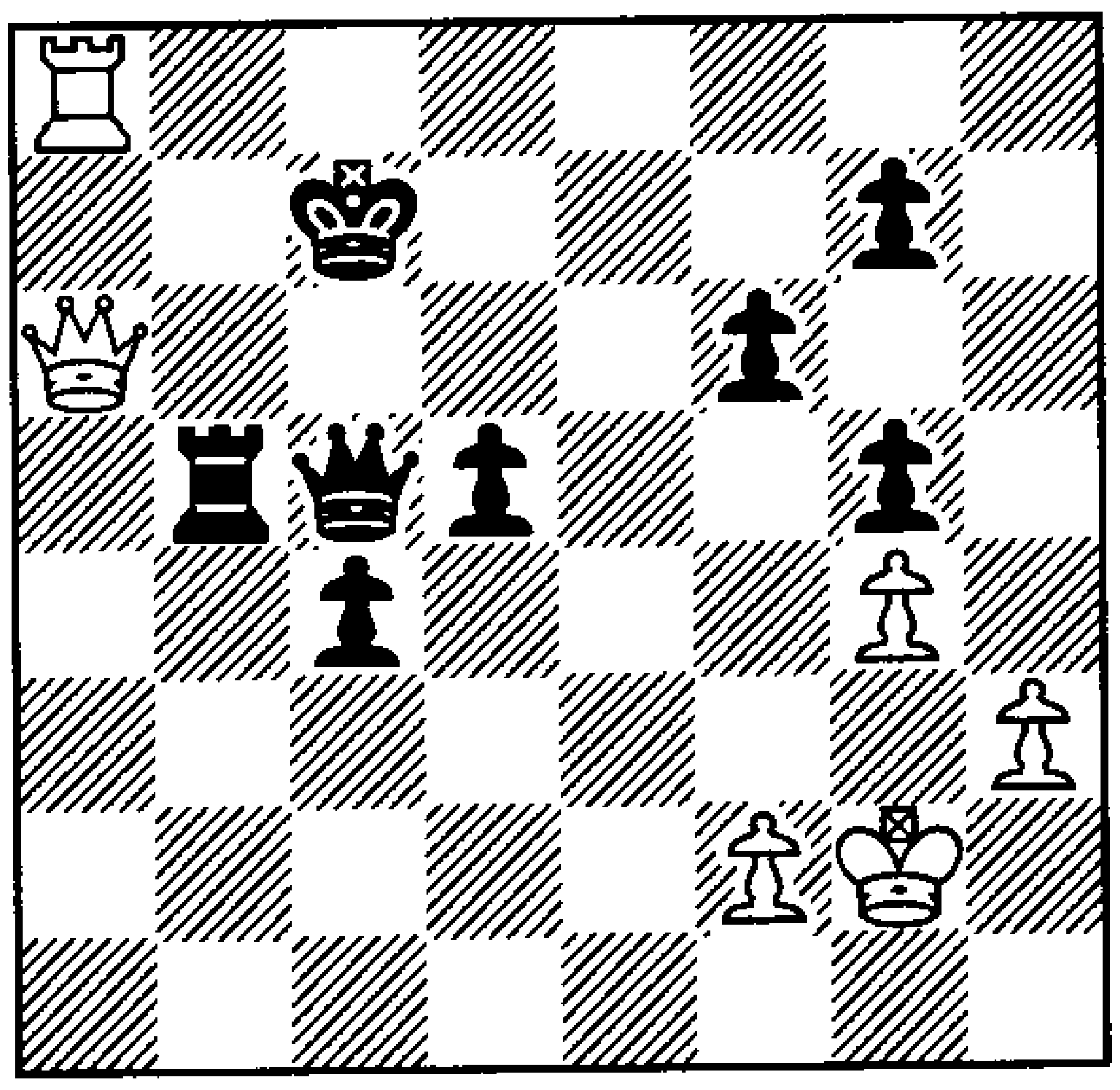
1) 54...♖b8 (after 54...c3 55 ♖e8! ♖a5 56 ♕e2 White is alright) 55 ♕a7+! (Tarrasch suggested 55 ♖a7+?! ♖b7 56 ♖a8, but after 56...♕b5! 57 ♕a3 d4 58 ♕e7+ ♕d7 or 57 ♕a1 ♔d7 58 ♕e1 ♕c6 59 ♕e8+ ♔d6 60 ♕f8+ ♔e5 the king avoids the checks) 55...♖b7 (54...c3?! 55 ♖e8! ♖a5 56 ♕e2) 56 ♕e3 ♕d6 'with a win for Black' – a variation by Lasker, contested by Schlechter with 57 ♖g8 d4 58 ♕e4 'with a strong attack for White', but also suitable is 57 ♕e1 ♖b8 58 ♖a7+ ♖b7 59 ♖a8 with a repetition. But after 56...c3! (instead of 56...♕d6?) 57 ♖e8 c2 58

♖e7+ ♔c6 59 ♕e6+ ♔c5 60 ♕c8+ ♔d4 61 ♖xb7 ♕c4! 62 ♖c7 c1♕ 63 ♖xc4+ ♕xc4 64 ♕d7 ♔c3 65 ♕xg7 ♕c6 Black does indeed have quite good winning chances.

My computer checked these subtleties for several hours, and as a result I came to the conclusion that the activity of White's heavy pieces is sufficient to save the game, only instead of 56 ♕e3? he should play 56 ♕a6!, for example: 56...♕b6 57 ♕a3 ♕b4 58 ♕a6 ♕e1 59 ♖g8 ♕e4+ 60 ♔h2 ♕e5+ 61 ♔g2 f5 62 ♖f8, or 56...♕e1 57 ♖g8! ♕e4+ (57...♕e7 58 ♕a5+ ♔c6 59 ♕a6+) 58 ♔h2 ♕e7, and here not 59 ♕a5+?! ♔d7! 60 ♕xd5+? ♕d6+, but 59 ♕a8 or 59 ♔g2!?

2) 54...♖b7 – Schlechter considered this to be the best chance, but after 55 ♕a6! (not 55 ♕e2? ♕d6 56 ♕e1 ♕e5 57 ♕a5+ ♔d7 58 ♖d8+ ♔e6 winning) we reach that same, apparently drawn position as in the previous paragraph.

55 ♕a6!



55...♖b8?

This is where the decisive mistake lies! 'If 55...♖b7 there follows 56 ♕e6! (with the pretty threat of ♖c8 mate) 56...♖b8 57 ♕f7+ ♔c8 58 ♕e8+ etc. Dr Lasker said that by 55...c3! 56 ♖c8+ ♔d7 57 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 at the cost of his queen he could still have gained a draw.' (*Krefelder Zeitung*, 13 February 1910) This is perfectly true: 58 ♕b7+ (58 ♕a4+ ♔c7 59 ♕c2 d4) 58...♔d6 59 ♕b6+ (or 59 ♕xg7 c2 60 ♕xf6+ ♔d7) 59...♖c6 60 ♕d8+ ♔e6 61 ♕g8+ ♔d6 62 ♕xg7 c2 63 ♕xf6+ ♔d7 64 ♕g7+ ♔c8.

It is not clear that Black would also have lost after 55...♕b6 56 ♕c8+ ♔d6 57 ♖a6 ♕xa6 58 ♕xa6+ ♔c5 (Capablanca), or 57 ♕f8+ ♔e5 58 ♖b8!? (58 ♕e8+ ♔d6 59 ♖d8+ ♕xd8 60 ♕xd8+ ♔c6 61 ♕e8+ ♔b6 62 ♕e6+ ♔a5 63 ♕f7 c3 64 ♕xg7 ♖c5) 58...♕b7 (58...♕xb8? 59 ♕e7+ and ♕e3 mate) 59 ♕a3 ♖b3 60 ♕a1+ ♔d6 61 ♖xb7 ♖xb7 62 ♕a6+ ♔c7 63 ♕e6 ♖b6 64 ♕xd5 ♖c6.

56 ♖a7+ ♔d8 (no longer sufficient was 56...♕xa7 57 ♕xa7+ ♖b7 58 ♕c5+ etc.) **57 ♖xg7 ♕b6 58 ♕a3 ♔c8** (58...♕b4 59 ♕a7!) **59 ♕f8+ 1-0**

59...♕d8 60 ♕c5+ and mate.

A highly interesting skirmish! This dramatic ending reminds me of the resumption of my game with Karpov (New York 8th matchgame 1990), where there also was a complicated queen and rook endgame, in which my opponent was a pawn up with winning prospects. But with an open king there are always some counter-chances, and after a sharp battle I managed to draw...

Thus Schlechter took the lead: 3-2. The Berlin part of the match began. The next four games again ended in draws, Lasker switching with Black to the Sicilian Defence: after **1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3** in the seventh game he tried **5...g6**, and in the ninth – **5...e5!?** which was extremely audacious for those times. The cautious Schlechter replied with the 'hideous', according to Tarrasch, **6 ♘b3?!** (6 ♘db5!), allowing **6...♗b4! 7 ♗d3 d5!** with a comfortable game for Black. After a complicated battle and mistakes by both sides an endgame was reached, in which the champion missed a seemingly certain win.

The score became 5-4 in the challenger's favour, and the day of the last, decisive day arrived. All or nothing! A fantastic moment in chess history: for both players only a win would do! But it would be interesting to know what would have happened if they had nevertheless played a draw: would Lasker have still been acknowledged as world champion? Or would another match with Schlechter have been demanded?..

The press has retained for us a 'photograph' of the two players on the day of that game: 'Lasker, with the pale face of a thinker, with his characteristic nose, and his small, seemingly closed eyes, which suddenly and unexpectedly open up on the chess board, all nervy, not capable of sitting still for an instant, constantly smoothing his combed-back hair with his hand. He thinks as though with his whole body, in which everything is constantly in motion – everything, apart from his face, on which a chess thought appears to have frozen... On the other side is Schlechter, a small, at first sight inconspicuous man, with a high, broad forehead, a cigar clutched in his hand, economic and cold in every movement. His eyes are directed straight at the board, and it appears that his thoughts are occupied only with his move.'

Game 58
Em.Lasker-K.Schlechter
World Championship Match,
Vienna/Berlin 1910, 10th game
Slav Defence D94

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 e3 g6!?

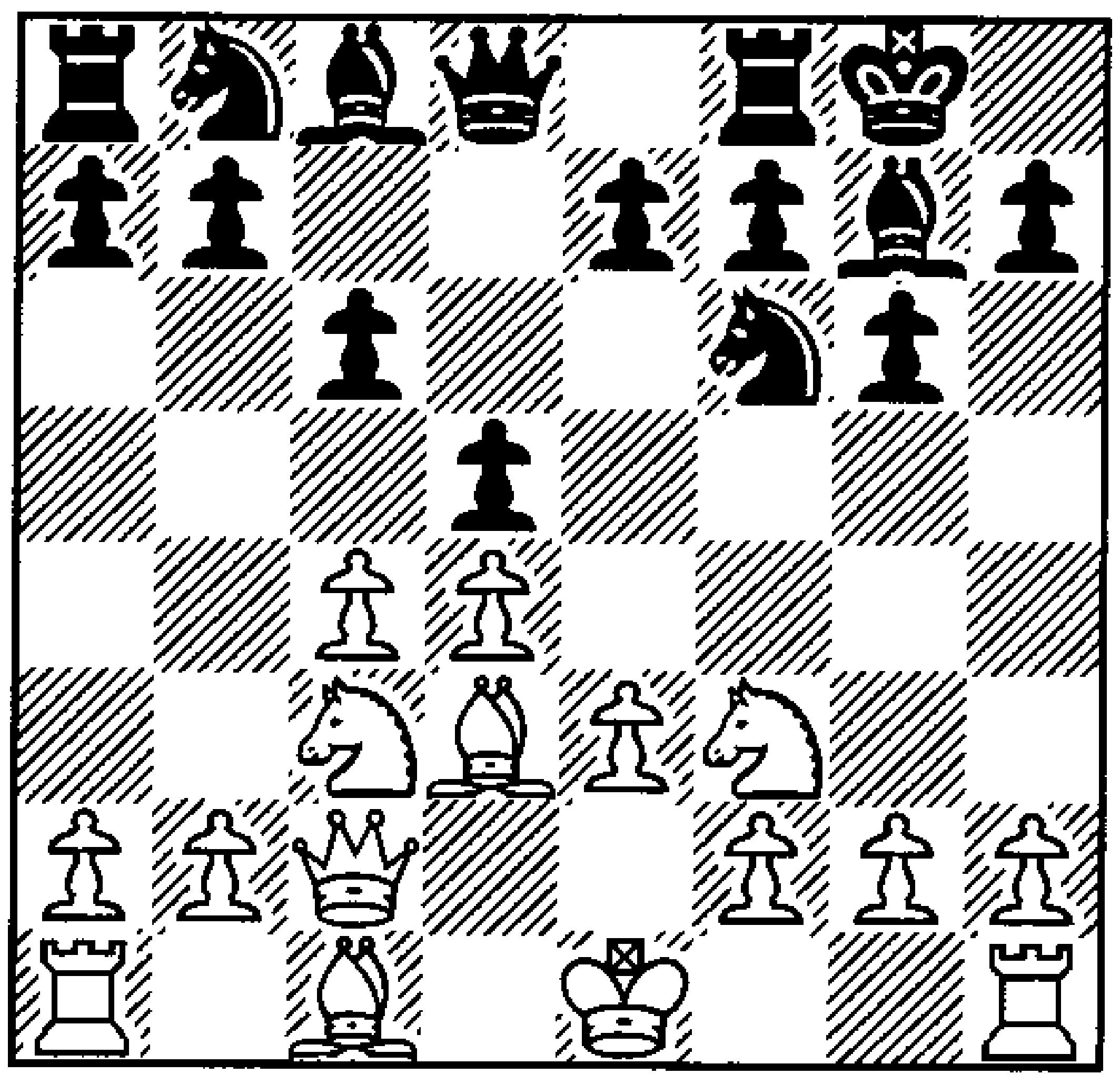
Avoiding 1 e4 for the first time in the match, Lasker encounters a surprise: an invention named after his opponent – the Schlechter Defence! At that time moves such as 4...g6 contradicted the generally-accepted opening norms. 'I did not want to play for a draw in the last game and I chose a little-known continuation, leading to interesting complications.' (Schlechter)

5 ♘c3 ♗g7 6 ♗d3 0-0

Already at that time Schlechter had sounded out the idea of 6...♗g4, which for the moment, however, is slightly premature because of 7 ♕b3.

7 ♕c2?!

Lasker avoids 7...♗g4 at the cost of a tempo. More natural is 7 0-0 ♗g4 (Smyslov's patent) 8 h3 ♗xf3 9 ♕xf3, and if 9...dxc4 (Smyslov used to prefer 9...e6, 9...♖e8 or 9...♕d6) 10 ♗xc4 ♘bd7 11 ♖d1 e5, then after 12 d5! (12 ♗b3 ♕e7 13 e4 exd4 14 ♖xd4 ♘c5 15 ♗c2 ♖fe8 16 ♗e3 ♖ad8 17 ♖e1 ♖xd4 18 ♗xd4 ♘fd7 equalises, Kasparov-Hübner, Cologne rapidplay 1992) 12...e4!? 13 ♘xe4 (13 ♕f4!?) 13...♘xe4 (13...♘e5!?) 14 ♕xe4 ♘b6 15 ♗b3 cxd5 16 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 17 ♖xd5 ♕b6 18 ♕d3 White retains a small plus (Bareev-Kramnik, Novgorod 1994).



7...♘a6

'Very boldly played; 7...♘bd7 is more solid.' (Schlechter) And... much more passive! Closer to the truth is Euwe's recommendation 7...dxc4 8 ♗xc4 c5 9 dxc5 ♘bd7. But in 1910 the idea of the Grünfeld Defence – to attack the white centre with the bishop on g7 – was not yet known, and the move 7...c5! seemed somehow improbable. But nowadays it is obvious: after 8 dxc5 ♕a5 (8...♘a6!? 9 cxd5 ♘b4 10 ♕d2 ♘fxd5 11 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 12 ♕xb4 ♕xd3 is also good) 9 cxd5 ♘xd5 10 ♗d2 ♘b4! or 9 0-0 dxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♕xc5 Black has easy equality

However, as one of the commentators aptly remarked, 'in this game equal play did not interest either Lasker, or Schlechter.'

8 a3 dxc4?!

Here the line 8...♘c7 9 0-0 ♗e6 (Bernstein-

Alekhine, Vilna 1912) is more solid, but the most energetic was again 8...c5!, e.g. 9 cxd5 cxd4 10 exd4 ♘c7 or 9 0-0 ♗g4 10 ♘e5 ♗e6.

9 ♗xc4 b5?

An irreparable weakening. In Euwe's opinion, 9...♘c7 10 e4 (10 0-0 ♗e6) 10...♗g4 would have equalised, but from the perspective of the 21st century we know that in such positions – after, say, 11 ♗e3 – White's chances are somewhat better.

10 ♗d3 b4?!

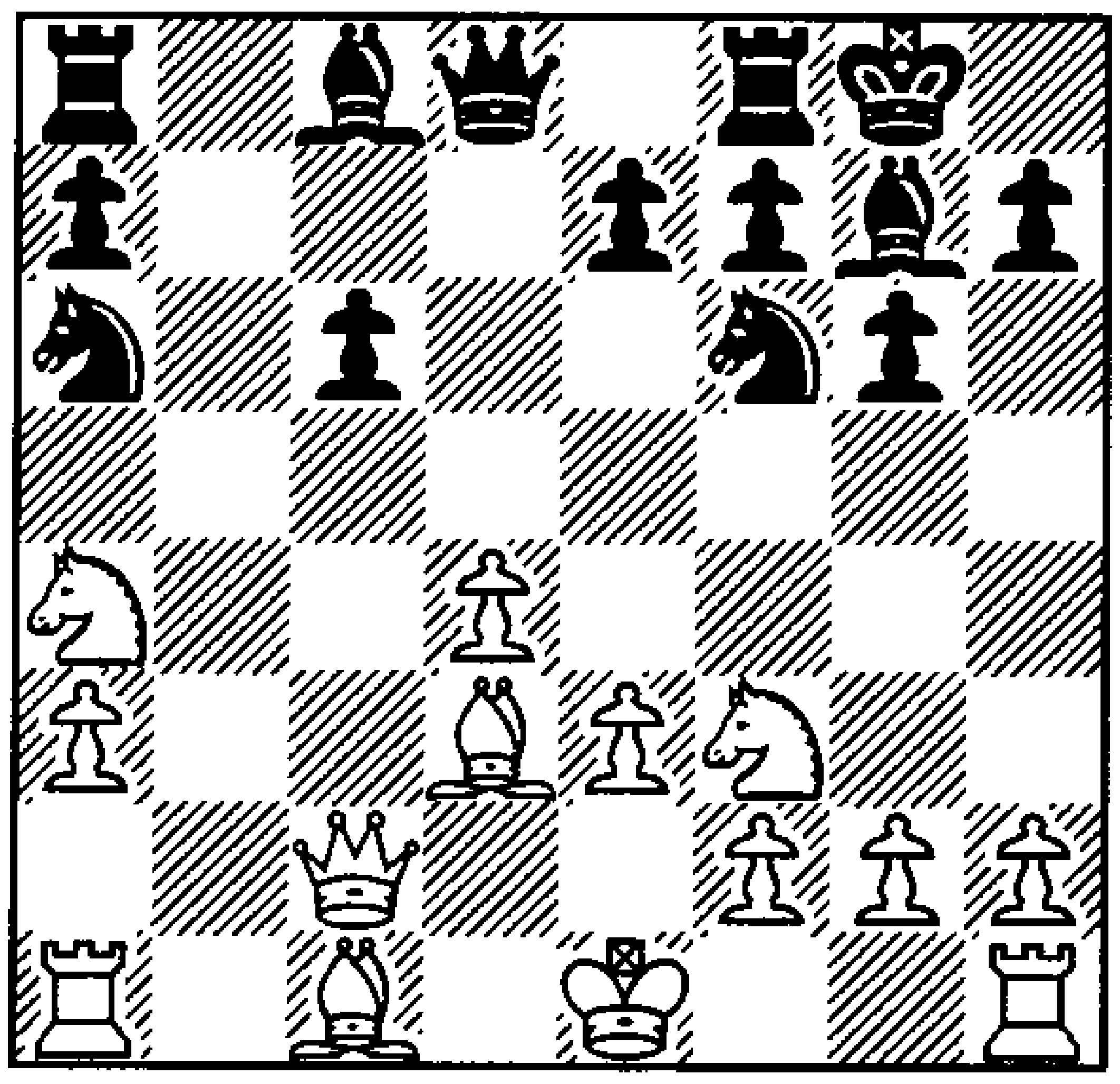
Another nervy, impulsive decision.

11 ♘a4

There is no point in taking the pawn – 11 ♗xa6?! (11 axb4?! ♘xb4 12 ♕e2 a5!) 11...♗xa6 12 axb4 ♕c8! 13 e4 ♕g4 14 ♖g1 ♗b7 15 ♗e3 (15...c5? 16 h3), since now Black simply has a 'dead' knight at a6, a 'hole-ridden' queenside and a strategically lost position. The challenger's opening experiment has been a failure, but, as we will soon see, that day this was of no significance.

11...bxa3 12 bxa3

Of course, not 12 ♕xc6?! ♘b4 13 ♕xa8? ♘xd3+ with a winning attack.



12...♗b7 13 ♖b1

If 13 0-0!? Lasker did not like 13...♘d7 (with the idea of ...c6-c5), although here too after 14 ♖b1 ♕c8 15 e4 c5 16 d5 Black's position is unenviable.

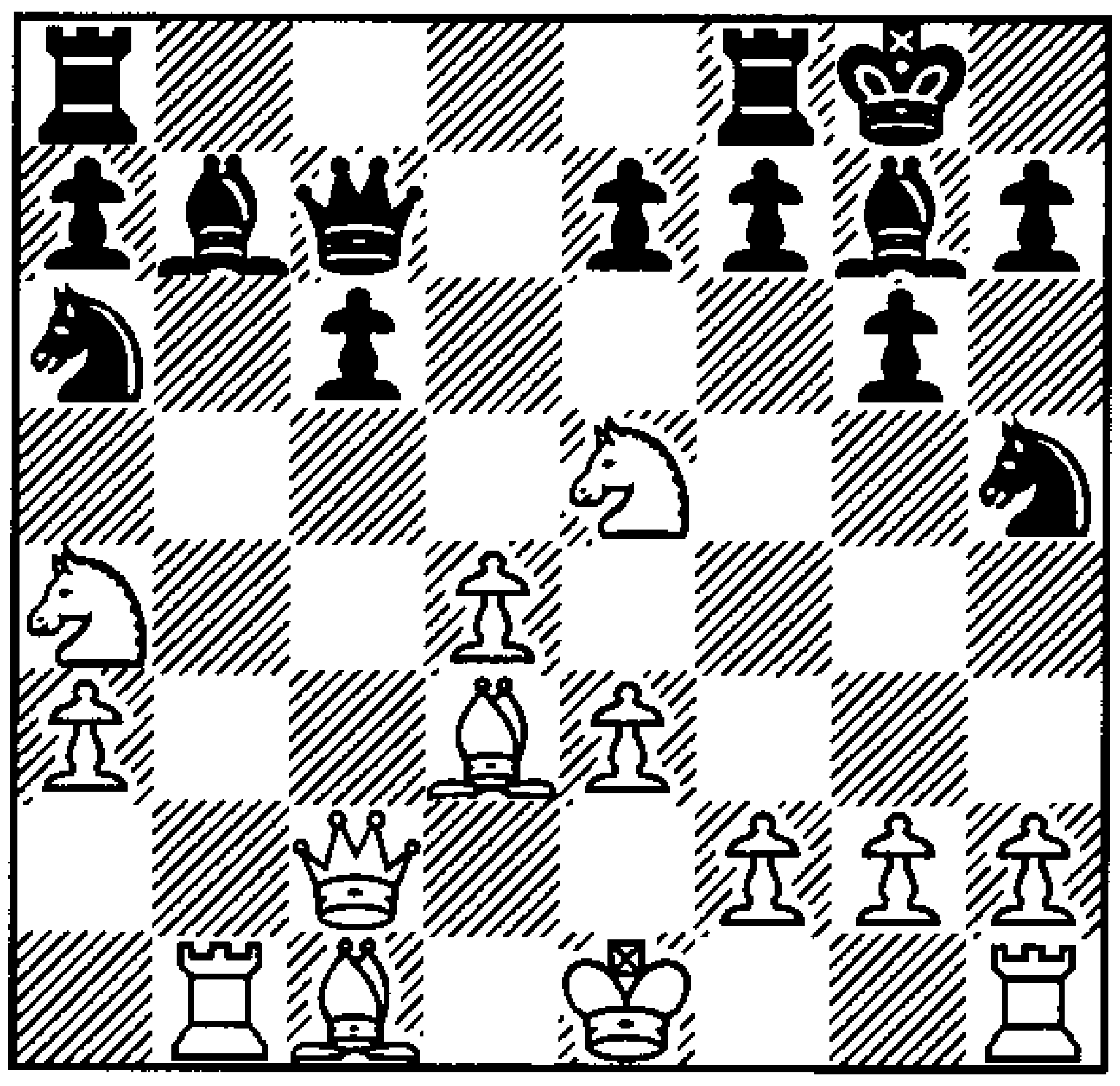
13...♕c7 14 ♘e5

'In his time Steinitz would have only needed roughly a dozen moves to blow up Black's position. But Lasker begins deviating from calm and consistent development and nervously forces the attack, gradually allowing his opponent counter-chances.' (Tarrasch)

It would appear that, having failed to win any of the previous nine games, Lasker had partly lost confidence in himself. In a normal situation Black's chronic weaknesses should have suggested to him the simple 14 0-0!? (Capablanca proposed the 'bold' 14 h4, but he himself would probably have castled) 14...♘d7 15 ♕e2 ♘ab8 16 ♗d2 with an overwhelming advantage.

14...♘h5

Of course, not 14...♘d7? 15 ♖xb7 ♕xb7 16 ♗xa6 or 14...♖ac8? 15 ♗xa6 ♗xa6 16 ♘c5 ♗b5 17 a4. But perhaps the best reaction to the knight sortie was 14...♘d5 15 0-0 ♗xe5 (15...f6 16 ♘f3 is hopeless) 16 dxe5 ♘b6, although after 17 e6! Black has an unpleasant position all the same: 17...♘xa4 18 ♕xa4 ♘c5 19 exf7+ ♖xf7 20 ♕c2 ♘xd3 21 ♕xd3 followed by f2-f3 and e3-e4.



15 g4?

The seventh game of the match with Steinitz (*Game No.37*) involuntarily comes to mind. Lasker explained his anti-positional move as follows: 'When so much depends on one game, the players become very excited and their imagination transforms into recklessness...'

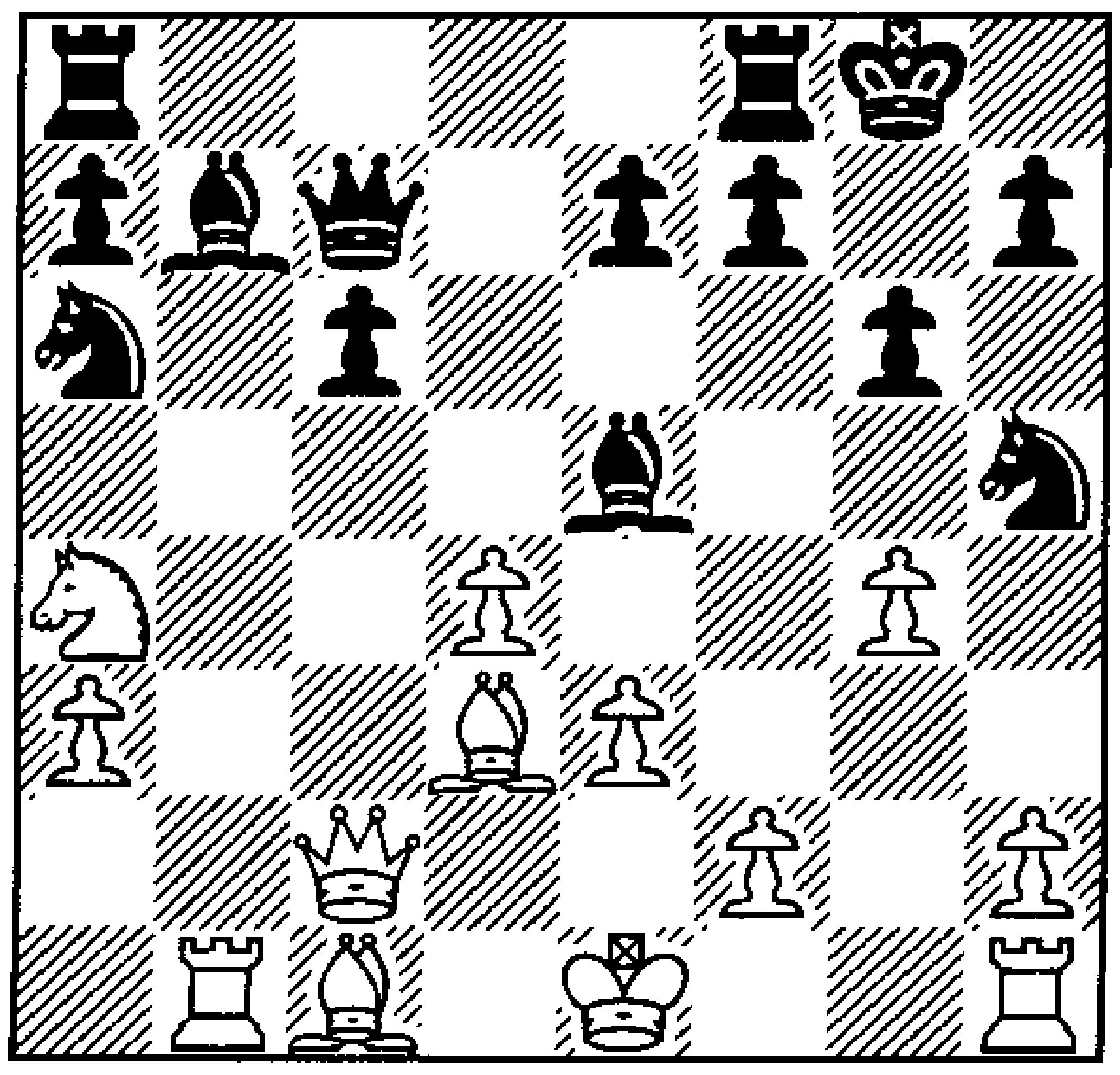
Tarrasch wisely remarked that 'in principle it is wrong to open up the kingside, giving the opponent compensation for his queenside defects,' pointed out the harmlessness of the variation 15 ♗xa6?! ♗xa6 16 ♕xc6 ♗xe5 17 ♕xa6 ♗xh2 18 g3 (18 ♗d2 ♗d6 19 g4 ♘f6 equalises) 18...♗xg3 19 ♖xh5 gxh5 20 fxg3 ♕xg3+, and recommended 15 f4 – after which Lasker was afraid of 15...♗xe5 (but not 15...♖fb8? 16 ♕c4 ♗xe5 17 fxe5 c5 18 0-0 winning) 16 dxe5 ♘g7 17 0-0 c5 'with equality', although after 18 ♕c4 ♗c8 19 e4 ♖d8 20 ♗e3 Black stands badly: his knight will not be able to move from a6.

The prosaic 15 0-0 was also possible, since 15...♗xe5 16 dxe5 ♕xe5? fails to 17 ♖xb7, while after 15...c5 16 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 17 ♕xc5 ♕xc5 18 dxc5 ♗xg2 19 ♔xg2 ♗xe5 20 f4! Black has a difficult endgame (Zak).

15...♗xe5?

This justifies Lasker's idea. It is surprising that no one pointed out the calm 15...♘f6! (Steinitz would surely have played this). The advance of the g-pawn has spoiled White's position, and although after 16 0-0 ♘d5 he retains some advantage, play is double-edged: 17 f4 ♘b6 18 ♗d2 c5 19 ♘xc5 ♖ac8 etc.

Whereas up to this point the players have been groping their way through unfamiliar opening territory, there now begins the phase that gives the entire game particular value. Positional factors retreat into the background, giving way to calculation and intuition. There begins 'play without rules', in which both these outstanding players demonstrate exceptional flights of imagination.

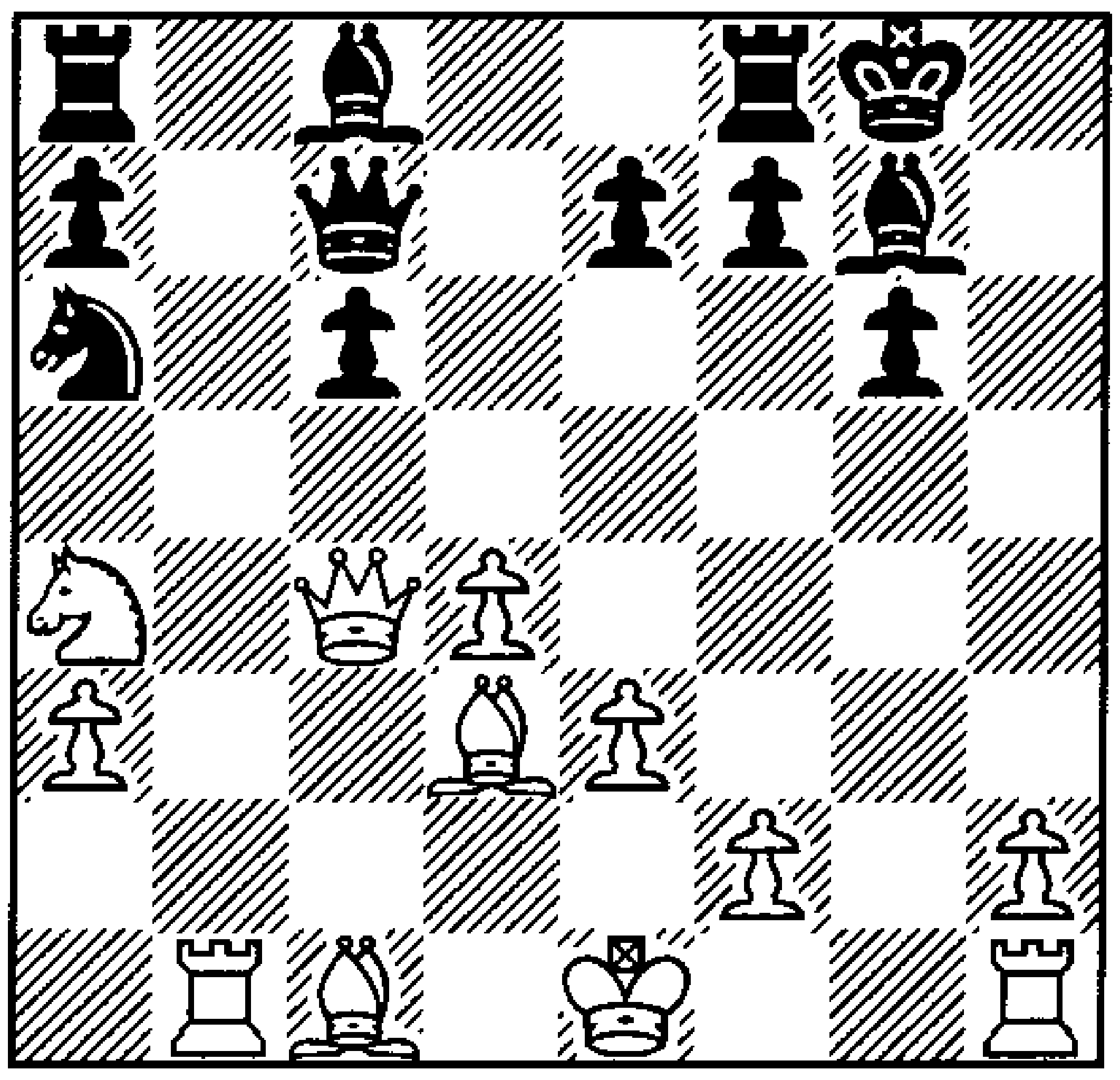


16 gxh5! (of course, not 16 dxe5 ♘g7 and ...♘e6) **16...♗g7 17 hxg6 hxg6 18 ♕c4!**

It was on this stroke that the world champion was counting, hoping to decide the game by tactical means: both ♗xg6 and ♖xb7 are threatened. If 18 h4?!, then 18...c5! 19 ♖g1 ♖ac8 is good, while after Tarrasch's recommendation of 18 f4 c5 19 ♖g1 – 19...♖ac8 20 ♗xa6 ♗xa6 21 ♘xc5 ♕d6 with unclear, double-edged play.

18...♗c8!

The only defence! 18...c5? is bad in view of 19 ♖g1 ♕xh2 20 ♖xg6 ♕h1+ 21 ♔d2, and after 21...♕f3! (21...cxd4? 22 ♖xg7+! ♔xg7 23 ♕xd4+ e5 24 ♕g4+ ♔h6 25 ♖xb7 and 21...♘c7? 22 ♖xg7+! ♔xg7 23 d5 ♕xd5 24 ♕g4+ ♔f6 25 ♖xb7! are hopeless) both 22 ♗e2 ♕h1 23 ♖xg7+! ♔xg7 24 d5 ♕xd5+ 25 ♕xd5 ♗xd5 26 ♗xa6 and 22 ♖xb7 ♕xb7 23 dxc5 ♕f3 24 ♖xa6 ♕xf2+ 25 ♗e2 are decisive.



19 ♖g1!?

A tempting move, creating the threat of ♖xg6. 'After 19 ♗xg6 ♗e6 20 ♗xf7+ ♗xf7 21 ♕xa6 ♗d5 Black has a strong attack.' (Schlechter) But, in my opinion, the variation 22 ♖g1 ♕xh2 23 ♕f1! ♖ab8 (23...e5? 24 ♖h1) 24 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 25 ♘c3 ♖b3 26 ♔d2 refutes this evaluation, and better is 20...♖xf7! 21 ♕xa6 ♗d5 with counterplay: 22 ♖g1 ♕xh2 23 ♕f1 ♖af8 24 ♖b2 (24 f4? ♕c2) 24...e5 25 ♘c3 exd4 26 exd4 ♕c7 etc., 22 ♖f1 ♗g2! (22...♕xh2 23 ♘b6 ♖b8 24 ♘xd5 – 24 ♕xa7

♗c4! – 24...♖xb1 25 ♕xc6 is unclear) 23 ♕b7 (23 ♖b7? ♗xf1) 23...♕xb7 24 ♖xb7 ♗xf1 25 ♔xf1 e5, or 22 ♖b7! ♕d6 23 ♖f1 ♗g2 24 f4 ♗xf1 25 ♕xf1, and White has had to give up the exchange for the initiative.

Meanwhile, he had two other excellent possibilities that did not involve giving up material:

1) 19 ♗d2!? (a developing move suggested by Tarrasch) 19...♖b8 (19...♕d6 20 ♗e4) 20 ♖xb8 ♘xb8 21 ♘c5, or 19...e5?! (recommended by Euwe) 20 ♗xg6 exd4 21 ♗e4 dxe3 22 ♗xe3 with an obvious advantage;

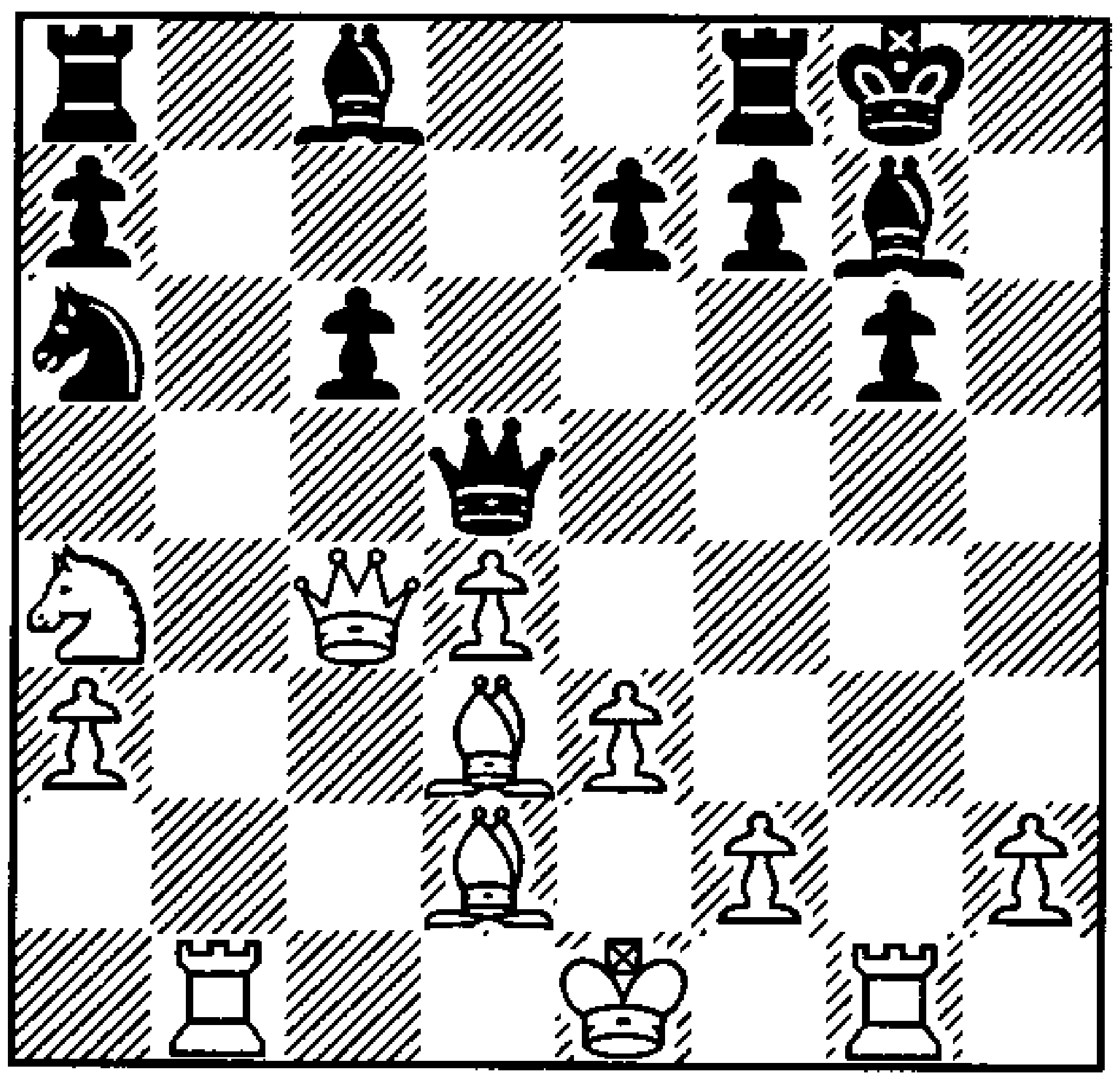
2) 19 h4! (a logical continuation of the assault) 19...♕a5+ (there is nothing better: 19...c5?! 20 dxc5) 20 ♗d2 ♕d5 21 ♕xd5 cxd5 22 h5!, and Black is in difficulties, for example: 22...g5 23 ♖g1 ♗f6 24 e4!, 'winning a pawn with a continuing attack.' (Zak)

Lasker was apparently afraid of the exchange of queens, but there was no need to: on the contrary, with the queens on the board the position of the white king in the centre will always promise Black counterplay.

19...♕a5+

But not 19...♕xh2? 20 ♖xg6 ♕h1+ 21 ♔d2 ♕f3 22 ♗b2! (threatening ♖bg1) 22...♕xf2+ 23 ♗e2 and wins. However, a continuation not mentioned by the commentators was possible: 19...e6!? 20 ♖g3 (or 20 f4 ♖d8) 20...♖d8, and after 21 ♗d2 White's advantage is rather less than in the game.

20 ♗d2 ♕d5



21 ♖c1

In my view, after 21 ♘c3!? (this is also not mentioned by anyone) 21...♕xc4 22 ♗xc4 ♔h8 23 ♘e4 Black has a very unpleasant position: White has a wide choice of possibilities, including the advance of the h-pawn. But, as I have already said, Lasker was afraid of selling himself too cheaply, by exchanging the queens.

21...♗b7

Here 21...♕xc4?! 22 ♖xc4 was now clearly bad.

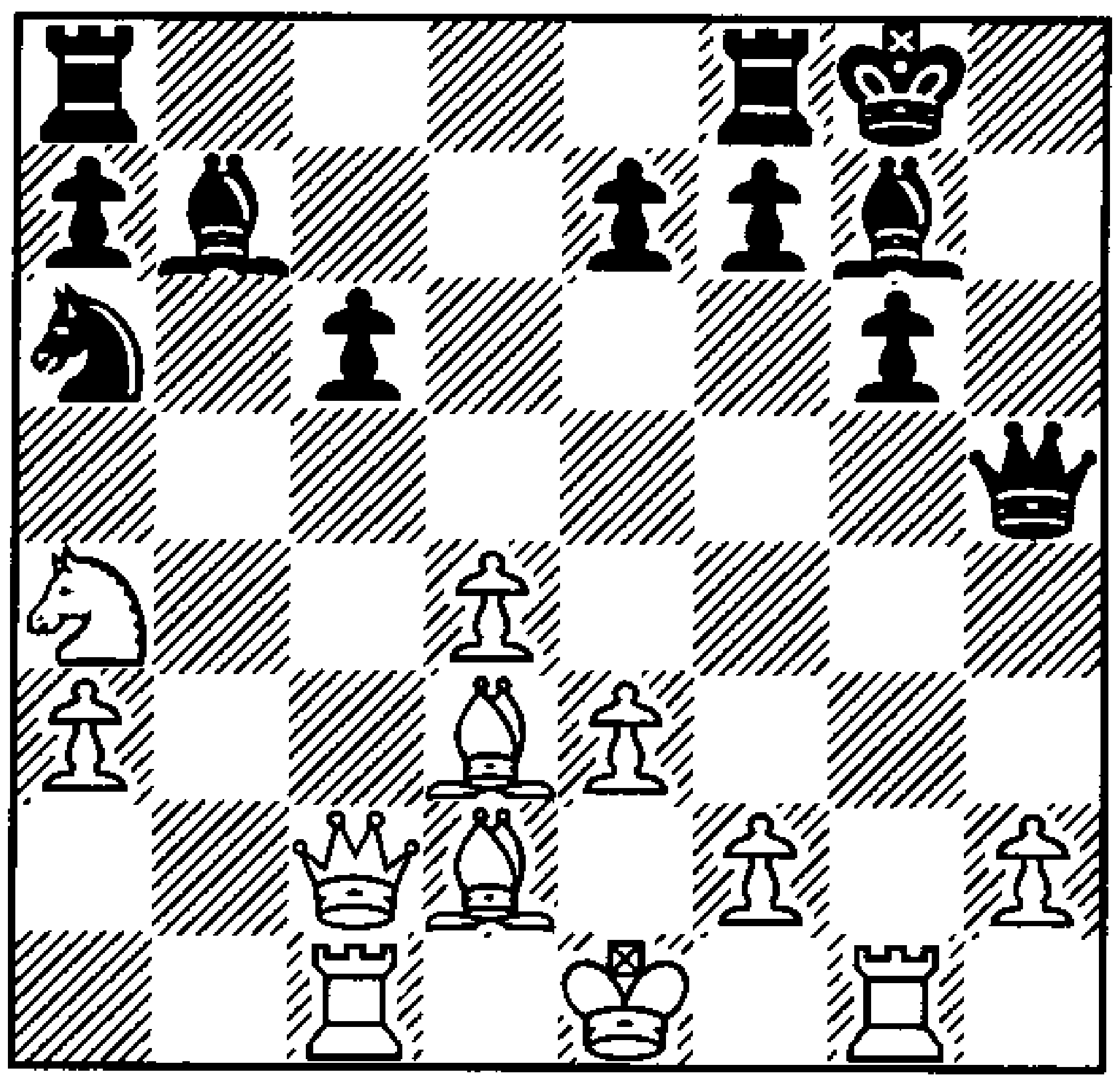
22 ♕c2!?

Looking for complications! Euwe suggested the cold 22 ♕xd5 cxd5 23 f4, and from the practical viewpoint he is right: with the knight on a6 White has an enduring advantage, and the plan with h2-h4-h5 remains in force. I think this is the way that Capablanca would have tried to handle the position.

However, for purely psychological reasons Lasker could no longer go in for the exchange of queens, since he had just avoided it in a more favourable situation.

22...♕h5

The queen attacks the h2-pawn and disturbs the white king. 'The threat of 23 ♖xg6 fxg6 24 ♗c4 would have been more accurately parried by 22...♕d6.' (Zak) A questionable assertion: after 23 ♕b3! (23 ♗xg6?! ♕xh2 24 ♖f1 fxg6, as in the game) Black has to play ...♕xh2 all the same, either immediately or after 23...♖ab8 24 ♖xg6.



But now a critical position has been reached: how is White to continue the offensive?

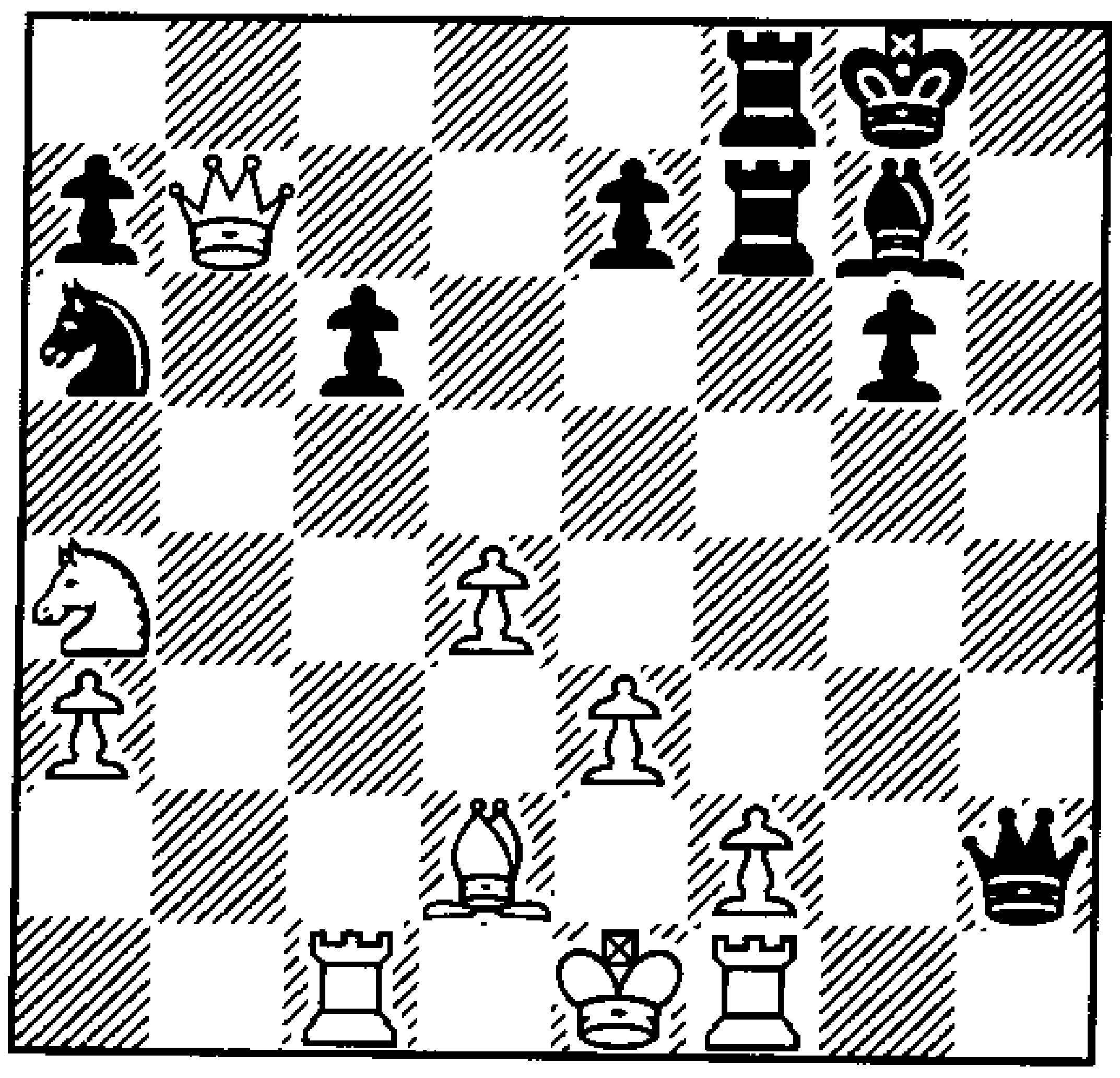
23 ♗xg6?

Lasker underestimates Black's counterplay along the opened f-file. Later he himself recommended 23 ♖b1 ♕xh2 24 ♖f1 (24 ♔e2 ♕h5+ 25 ♔e1 ♕h2) 24...♕c7?! 25 ♗xg6?! fxg6 26 ♕b3+ ♖f7 27 ♕xb7 'and wins', although after 27...♖b8! 28 ♕xc7 ♖xb1+ 29 ♔e2 ♖xf2+! 30 ♖xf2 ♘xc7 Black is perfectly alright. In my opinion, correct is 25 ♗c4! e6 26 ♕d3 ♘b8 27 ♘c5 ♗c8 28 ♖h1 with a powerful initiative, and therefore the best defence is 24...♗c8! 25 ♕xc6 ♖b8.

Zak suggested the 'further strengthening of the position by 23 ♗c4 e6 24 ♕d3 ♘c7 (24...♕xh2 25 ♕f1!) 25 ♘c5 ♗c8 26 ♘e4 etc.' but after 26...♘d5 (or 26 ♕e4 ♘d5 27 ♗e2 ♕h3) the situation is less favourable for White than the diagram position. And, apparently, best of all is Capablanca's recommendation 23 ♕b3! ♖ab8 24 ♖xg6 ♕xh2 25 ♗e4 – in my view White has strong pressure; the main thing is that Black is still suffering due to his ill-starred knight at a6.

In general it must once again be emphasised that without the queens White would have significantly fewer problems. As we will now see...

23...♕xh2! 24 ♖f1 fxg6 25 ♕b3+ ♖f7 26 ♕xb7 ♖af8!



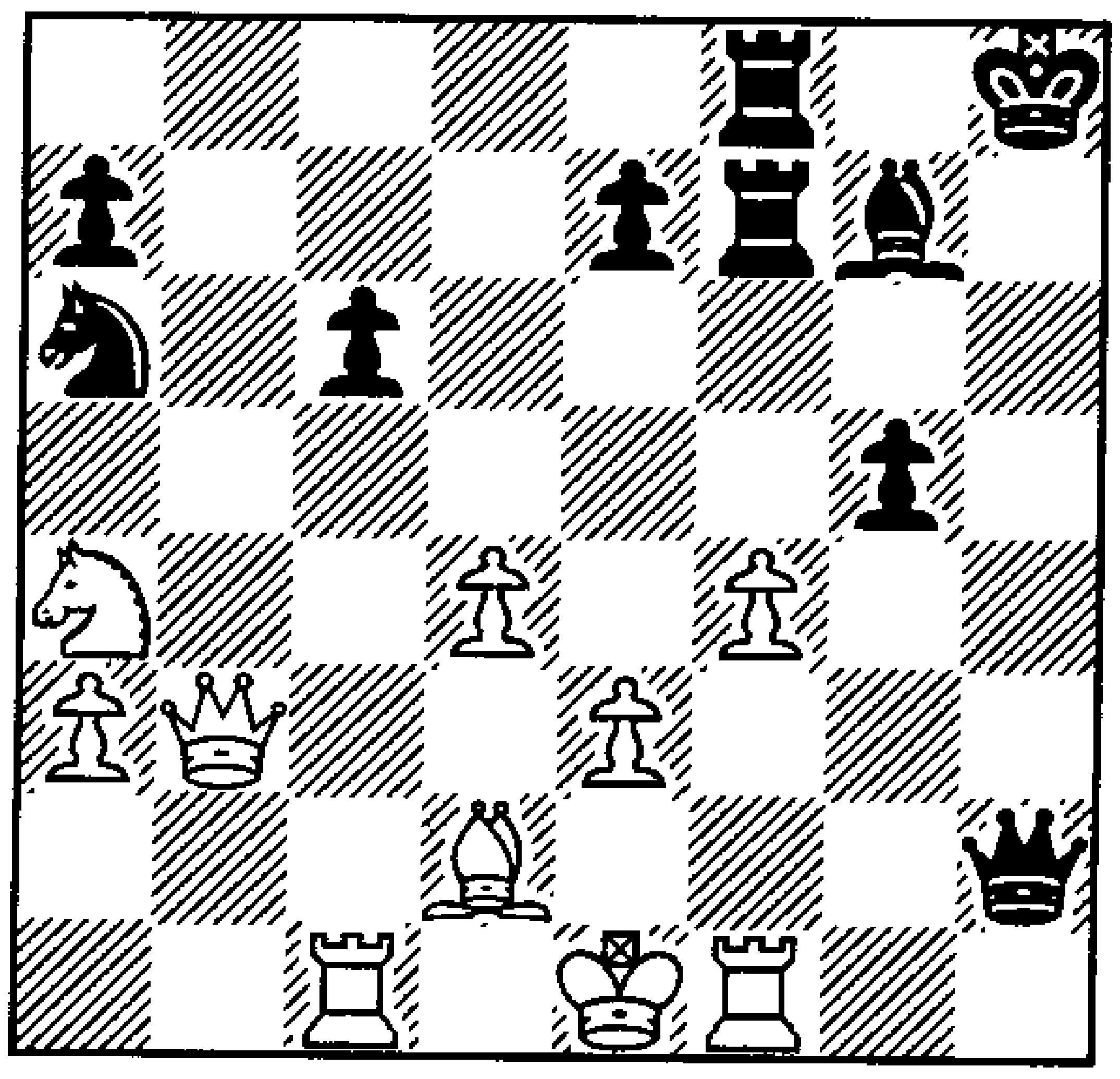
Schlechter takes heart! For the first time in a long while the position, from being openly bad for Black, has been transformed into one that is completely unclear: 27 ♕xa6? fails to 27...♖xf2 28 ♖xf2 ♖xf2. This 'knight gambit' reminds me of a grandiose 'Spanish' from my return match with Karpov (London/Leningrad 16th matchgame 1986), where my opponent captured a knight on a3 and came under a mating attack.

With Schlechter it all turned out the other way round: by the irony of fate he lost all his pieces, apart from his wretched knight. How paradoxical: it is the knight offered as a sacrifice that remains alive! Apparently, as a punishment: it really is a very bad piece...

27 ♕b3

Lasker avoids 27 f4 not only because of 27...♘b8!? (but not 27...e5? 28 ♕xa6 exf4 29 ♕c4! fxe3?! 30 ♗xe3 winning) with sharp play: 28 ♕b3 (28 ♕b4 g5!?) 28...♕g3+ 29 ♔d1 (29 ♔e2?! ♗xd4 30 ♖g1 ♕h2+ 31 ♔d3 ♗g7 and ...♖d8 Euwe) 29...♗xd4 30 ♔c2 ♗g7 31 ♘c5 ♕h3 etc. It is simply that Black could have given perpetual check 27...♕h4+ 28 ♖f2 ♕h1+ 29 ♔e2 ♕h5+ 30 ♔d3 ♕f5+ 31 ♔e2 ♕h5+ 32 ♔e1 (dangerous is 32 ♖f3?! e5! 33 ♕xc6 exf4 34 e4 ♘c7) 32...♕h1+. I don't know if Schlechter would have played this, but he did have a draw.

27...♔h8 28 f4 g5!?



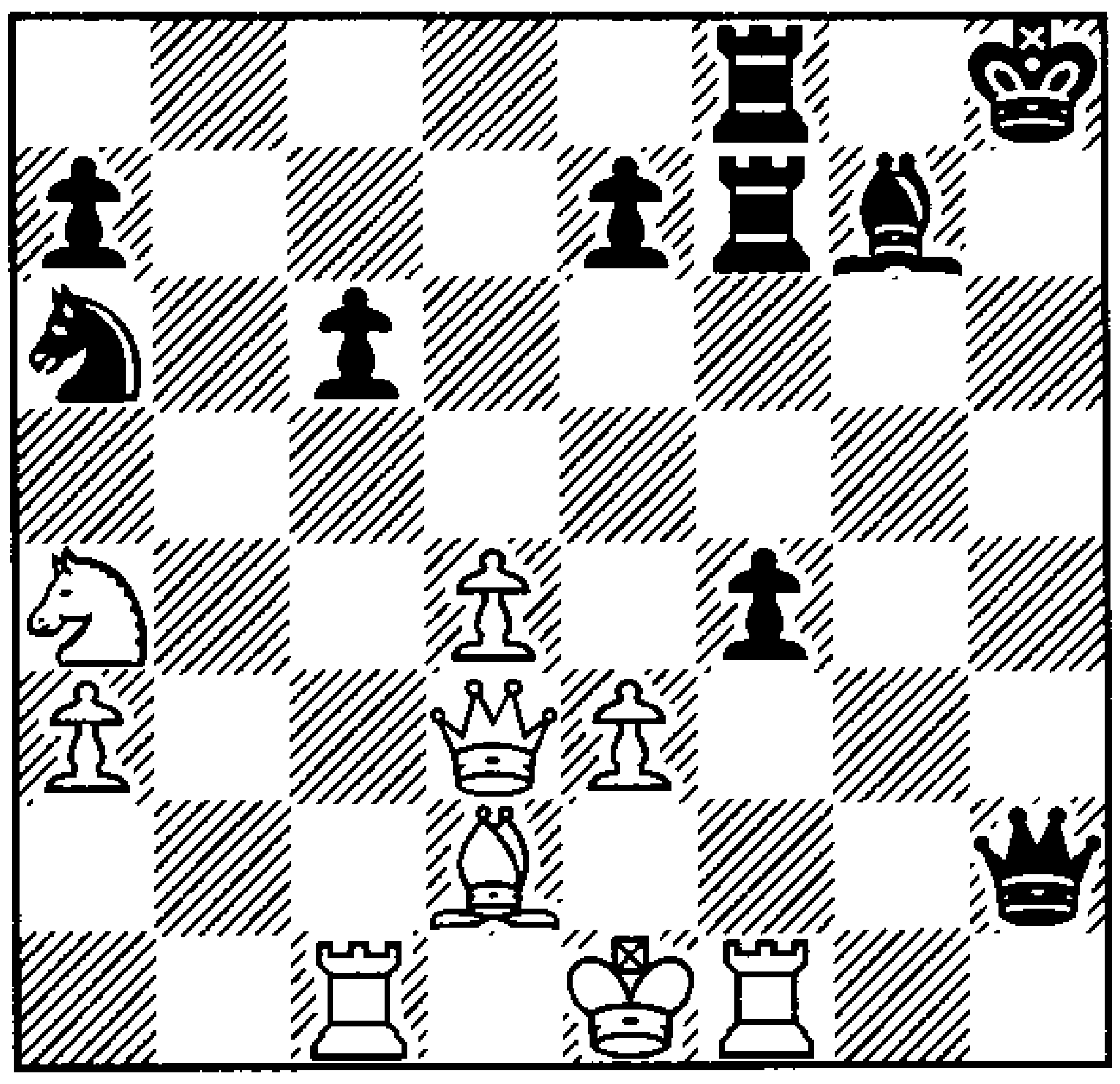
Dubious was 28...♕g3+?! 29 ♔d1 ♖xf4 30 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 31 ♔c2! (Lasker). And indeed, the white king hides, whereas Black's comes under attack: 31...♖f2 32 ♖h1+ ♗h6 33 ♕d3 ♔g7 34 ♖xh6! ♔xh6 35 ♕xa6 (if 35...♕xe3? the pin 36 ♕d3 is decisive).

Much more interesting was the little-studied continuation 28...e5!? 29 dxe5 ♕g3+ 30 ♔e2 ♖xf4 31 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 32 ♖h1+ ♖h4 33 ♖xh4+ ♕xh4 with sharp, unclear play. Apparently, after 34 e6 the most probable outcome is a draw; at any event Black's chances are not worse. I think that 28...e5 is at least as good as the move in the game.

29 ♕d3

White's position is still quite good, as is shown by the variation 29 ♖xc6!? ♘b8 (some commentators give 29...gxf4? 30 ♖xa6?? fxe3 31 ♖xf7 ♕xd2+ 32 ♔f1 e2+, but 30 exf4! ♘b8 31 ♖c3 is the end for Black) 30 ♖c7 (30 ♖e6 ♕g3+ 31 ♔d1 ♖xf4) 30...♕g3+ (inferior is 30...gxf4? 31 exf4 ♗xd4 32 ♕d5 ♕g3+ 33 ♔d1 ♗f6 34 ♘c3 ♖h7 35 ♔c2) 31 ♔d1 ♖xf4 32 ♖h1+ ♖h4 33 ♕b7 ♖xh1+ 34 ♕xh1+ ♕h4 35 ♕b7 ♗e5! 36 ♖xe7! (36 ♖c3 ♗d6 37 ♔c2 g4 is unclear) 36...♗d6 37 ♖e4 ♕h1+ 38 ♔c2 ♗xa3 39 ♘c3 or 39 ♘c5 with the better prospects.

29...gxf4



30 exf4 (but not 30 ♕xa6?? fxe3)

30...♕h4+

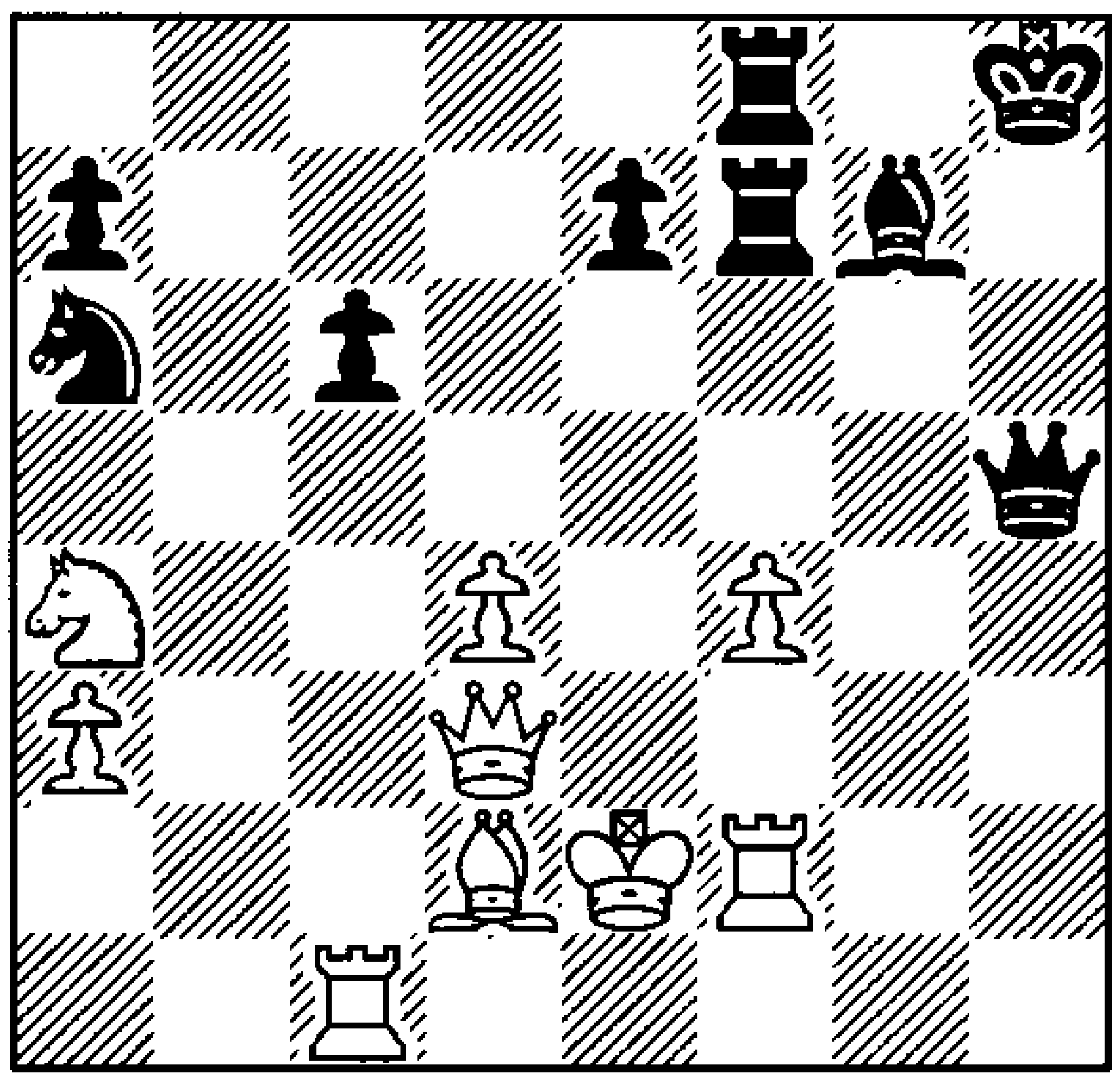
Perhaps the champion was hoping for 30...♘b8? 31 ♘c5! ♗h6 32 ♘e6 ♖g8 33 d5 with an obvious advantage: 33...♕h4+ (or 33...♖f6 34 ♗c3 ♕h4+ 35 ♔d1 etc.) 34 ♔d1 ♕h5+ 35 ♔c2 ♕f5 36 ♖h1 ♖g6 37 ♖b1 ♘d7 38 ♕xf5 ♖xf5 39 dxc6 ♖xe6 40 cxd7 ♖f8 41 f5 ♖c6+ 42 ♗c3+ ♔h7 43 ♖be1 and wins.

31 ♔e2

Avoiding 31 ♔d1 ♕g4+ 32 ♔c2 ♕f5 with simplification and a draw: 33 ♖h1+ ♔g8 34 ♖cg1 ♕xd3+ 35 ♔xd3 ♖d8, or 33 ♕xf5 ♖xf5 34 ♖ce1 (34 ♔d3?! ♖d8) 34...♗xd4 35 ♖xe7 ♖8f7. Lasker is eager to win!

31...♕h2+ 32 ♖f2 ♕h5+

Here (or a move earlier) the game was adjourned, and resumed the following day. It was one of the most dramatic adjournment sessions in the history of chess!



33 ♖f3 (not 33 ♔e3? ♖xf4! 34 ♖xf4 ♗h6 35 ♖cf1 ♘c7! 36 ♕e4 ♖xf4 37 ♖xf4 ♘d5+ 38 ♔f2 ♕h2+ 39 ♔f3? ♗xf4 40 ♗xf4 ♕h1+)

33...♘c7!

After 33...♘b8?! Lasker was planning 34 ♖h1 ♕xh1 35 ♖h3+, although 34 ♘c5 also promises an advantage. But with the knight on c7 the exchange 34 ♖h1 ♕xh1 35 ♖h3+ is dubious on account of 35...♕xh3 36 ♕xh3+ ♔g8 37 ♘c5 ♘b5! 38 ♘e6 ♘xd4+ 39 ♘xd4 ♗xd4, when White is even slightly worse.

34 ♖xc6?!

'In this game one is amazed by Schlechter's tireless boldness in attack and Lasker's iron composure in defence.' (B. Vainstein) 'Incredible! Lasker is threatened with destruction from every side, and he grabs a pawn! This resembles a general who under a hail of bullets lights up a cigar.' (Tarrasch)

Of course, it would have been more

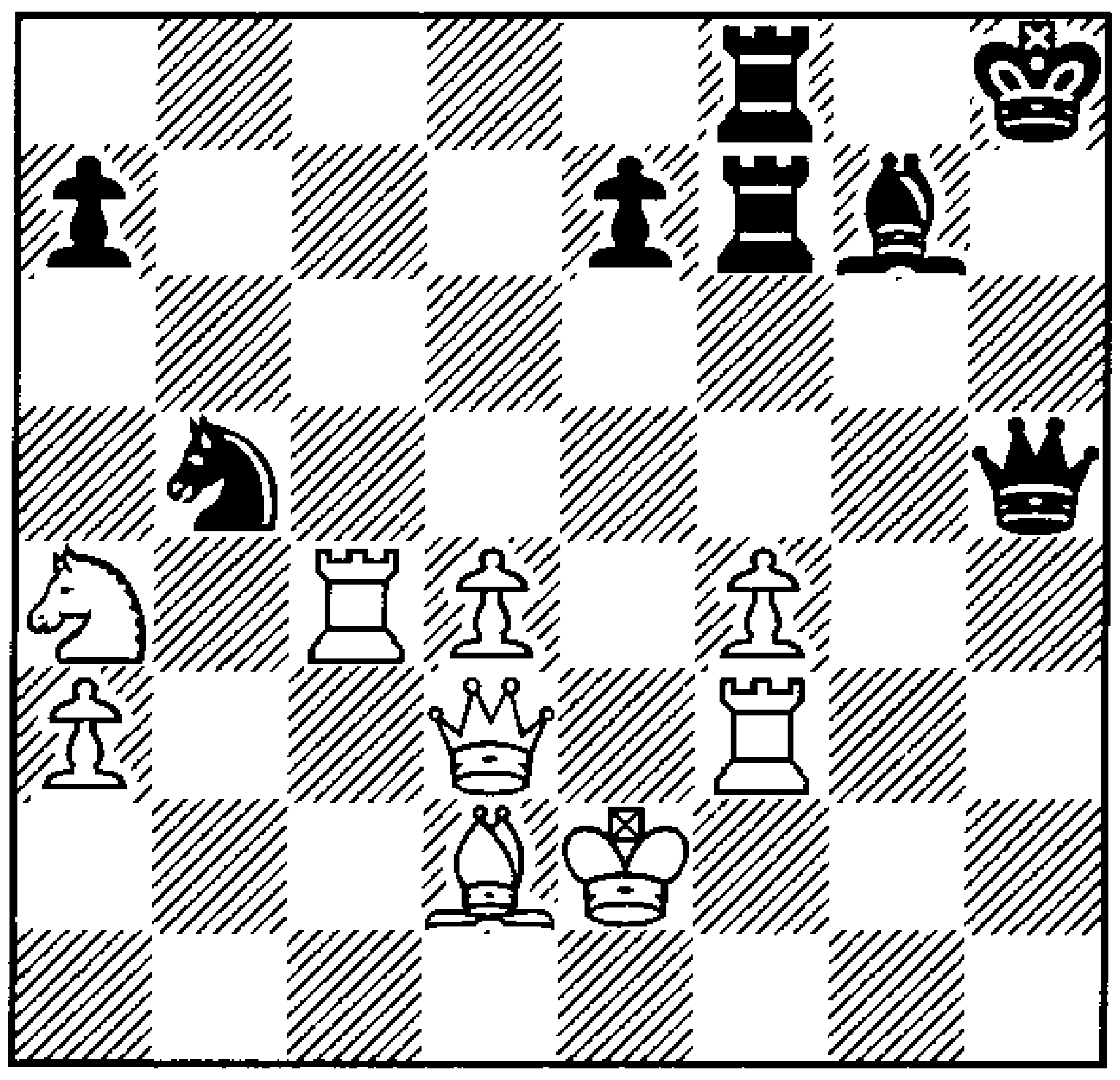
sensible to bring the knight into play – 34 ♘c5, in order after 34...♘d5 to make the leap 35 ♘e6 with very sharp play and, apparently, dynamic equilibrium. At any event, White would have been out of the danger zone, whereas now he is on the edge of the abyss, although computer analysis shows that, contrary to the opinion of many commentators, Black has no forced win.

34...♘b5!

Schlechter considered 34...♘d5 to be 'very strong and probably decisive', but Lasker refuted this by 35 ♕g6! (but not 35 ♖c5? ♖xf4! 36 ♗xf4 ♘xf4+ 37 ♔d1 e5! 38 ♕f1 ♘g6 winning) 35...♕xg6 36 ♖xg6 ♘xf4+ (inferior is 36...♖xf4?! 37 ♖h3+ ♔g8 38 ♖hg3! ♖8f7 39 ♘c5 ♖4f6 40 ♘e6 etc.) 37 ♗xf4 ♖xf4 38 ♖h3+ ♔g8 39 ♖hg3 (39 ♘c5 ♖8f6 40 ♖g2 ♖d6 41 ♔e3 ♖f7 is level) 39...♖4f7 (*? – G. K.*) 40 ♘c5 with advantage to White. I would like to refine this: 39...♖e4+! gives an immediate draw: 40 ♔d3 (40 ♖e3 is equal) 40...♖xd4+ 41 ♔e3 ♖xa4 42 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 43 ♔e2.

35 ♖c4!

An immediate catastrophe results from 35 ♖c5? ♘xd4+! 36 ♕xd4 ♕xf3+ or 35 ♗e3? ♘xd4+! 36 ♗xd4 ♖xf4 37 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 38 ♕c3+ e5 39 ♖c7+ ♔h8.



35...♖xf4?

Some kind of black-out. 'This combination is incorrect. I calculated the variation 36 ♗xf4 ♖xf4 37 ♖c8+ ♗f8 38 ♔f2 ♕h4+ 39 ♔g2! (39 ♔e2 ♕h2+ 40 ♔e3 ♖xf3+ 41 ♔xf3 ♕h3+ and ...♕xc8) 39...♕g4+, noticing too late 40 ♖g3! ♕xc8 41 ♕g6,' writes Schlechter. 'Decisive was 35...♖d8!, and if 36 ♗e3, then 36...e5.' Indeed, after 37 ♖c5 (37 d5 ♘d6) 37...♘xd4+ 38 ♗xd4 (38 ♕xd4 ♕xf3+) 38...♖xf4 39 ♘c3 ♖fxd4 40 ♕e3 ♖d3 White can resign.

Also unsuitable is 36 d5? (instead of 36 ♗e3?) 36...♖xd5 37 ♖c8+ ♖f8 38 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 39 ♗c3+ ♗g7 40 ♕c4 (or 40 ♕e3 ♗d4!) 40...♘xc3+ 41 ♘xc3 ♖c5 winning. However, after Minev's brilliant discovery 36 ♔e1!! it is now Black who has to find a way to save the game: 36...♕h1+ (36...♘xd4? 37 ♖h3 wins) 37 ♕f1 ♕xf1+ 38 ♔xf1 ♘xd4 39 ♖h3+ ♔g8 40 ♔g2 with a level position.

Years later Capablanca suggested 35...e5!? This leads to a crazy position, which does not lend itself to evaluation: 36 dxe5 ♗xe5 37 ♔e1 ♗f6 38 ♖c5 ♕h1+ 39 ♖f1 ♕h4+ 40 ♔d1 ♘d4 41 ♖d5 ♕g4+ 42 ♔c1 ♘e2+ 43 ♔b1. Here too there can be no question of a 'decisive advantage' for Black: all three results are possible.

From the purely practical viewpoint, probably more promising is Tarrasch's recommendation of 35...♘d6!? 36 ♖c5 ♘f5, building up the pressure. For example: 37 ♔e1 (but not 37 ♗e3? ♕g4 – with the threat of ...♘h4 – 38 ♔f2 ♘xe3 39 ♕xe3 ♖xf4 and wins) 37...♕h4+ (37...♕h1+ 38 ♖f1 ♕g2 39 ♕f3) 38 ♔d1 ♕g4 39 ♔c1 ♕g1+ 40 ♖f1 ♕xd4 41 ♕xd4 ♘xd4 with a somewhat better endgame, or 37 ♔d1 ♖d8 (Lasker judged this move to favour Black; 37...♕g4 38 ♔c1! ♕g1+ 39 ♖f1 is equal) 38 ♔c1!, and here I somehow failed to find any particular advantage for Black.

Thus, although Schlechter held an appreciable initiative, nowhere did he have a direct win. The play was double-edged, and Lasker did not intend to give up his crown...

36 ♗xf4 ♖xf4 37 ♖c8+ ♗f8 38 ♔f2!

Finally White can breathe more freely. A number of sources recommended 38 ♖d8 e5! (38...e6 39 ♕e3; 38...♕g4 39 ♔f2) 39 dxe5 ♕g4 40 ♕e3! (but not 40 ♔f2? ♖xf3+ 41

♕xf3 ♕h4+ 42 ♔e2 ♕xd8) 40...♘d4+ 41 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 42 ♘c3 ♗xa3 (42...♗c5!?) 43 e6 ♗e7 44 ♔f1 'with advantage'. But in fact 44...♖b4! gives an easy draw: 45 ♕e5+ ♔h7 46 ♖f7+ ♔g8.

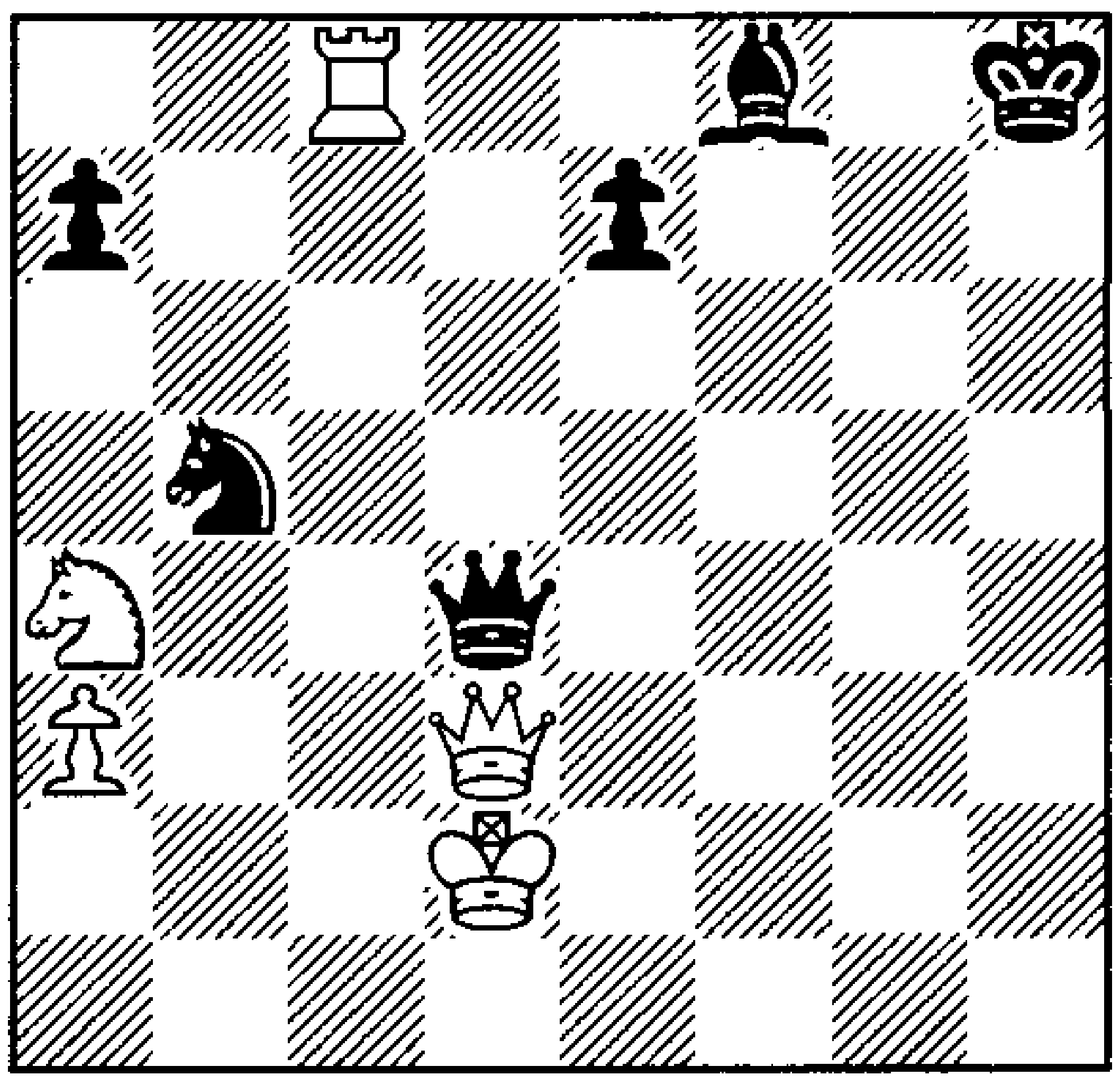
38...♕h2+ (Black avoids the variation referred to: 38...♕h4+ 39 ♔g2! ♕g4+ 40 ♖g3! ♕xc8 41 ♕g6 and as yet he is by no means losing) **39 ♔e1 ♕h1+?**

Allowing the white king to escape successfully from the checks, whereas the move 39...♕h4+! would have guaranteed Black at least a draw:

1) 40 ♔f1 (40 ♖g3? ♕h1+ 41 ♔d2 ♖f2+; 40 ♔d1? ♕h1+ 41 ♔e2 ♖xf3 42 ♕xf3 ♘xd4+) 40...♕h3+ 41 ♔f2 ♖xf3+ 42 ♕xf3 ♕xc8 43 ♕h5+ ♔g8 44 ♕xb5 ♕c2+, and White still has to make several accurate moves to achieve complete equality: 45 ♔g3 ♕g6+ 46 ♔f3 ♕f6+ 47 ♔e4 ♕h4+ 48 ♔d3 ♕h3+ 49 ♔c2;

2) 40 ♔d2 ♕h2+ 41 ♔e1 (dangerous is 41 ♔e3? ♖xf3+ 42 ♔xf3 ♕h3+ 43 ♔e2 ♕xc8 44 ♕xb5 ♕c2+ 45 ♔f3 ♕d1+ 46 ♔e4 ♕h1+!) 41...♕h4+ with perpetual check: after any attempt to run, the rook at c8 is lost.

40 ♖f1 ♕h4+ 41 ♔d2 ♖xf1 (41...♖xd4? 42 ♖cxf8+ ♔g7 43 ♖1f7+ and mate) **42 ♕xf1 ♕xd4+ 43 ♕d3**



For the first time after the wild complications the advantage has passed to Lasker.

43...♕f2+

Hopeless is 43...♕xd3+ 44 ♔xd3 ♔g7 45 ♘c5 or 43...♕f4+ 44 ♕e3 ♕xe3+?! (44...♕h2+ is more tenacious) 45 ♔xe3 ♔g8 46 ♘c5 (46...♘xa3? is not possible due to 47 ♘e6).

44 ♔d1 ♘d6

'After 44...a6 there would have followed 45 ♘b6, and if 44...♕g1+, then 45 ♔c2 ♘d4+ 46 ♔b2 ♕g2+ 47 ♔a1 ♕h1+ 48 ♔a2 ♕g2+ 49 ♘b2 winning.' (Lasker) White's winning plan is to coordinate his forces, exchange queens, pick up the a-pawn and advance his own passed pawn to the queening square. It is hard to prevent this plan, especially since the champion carries it out with merciless consistency, whereas the challenger is clearly disheartened...

45 ♖c5 ♗h6 46 ♖d5 ♔g8

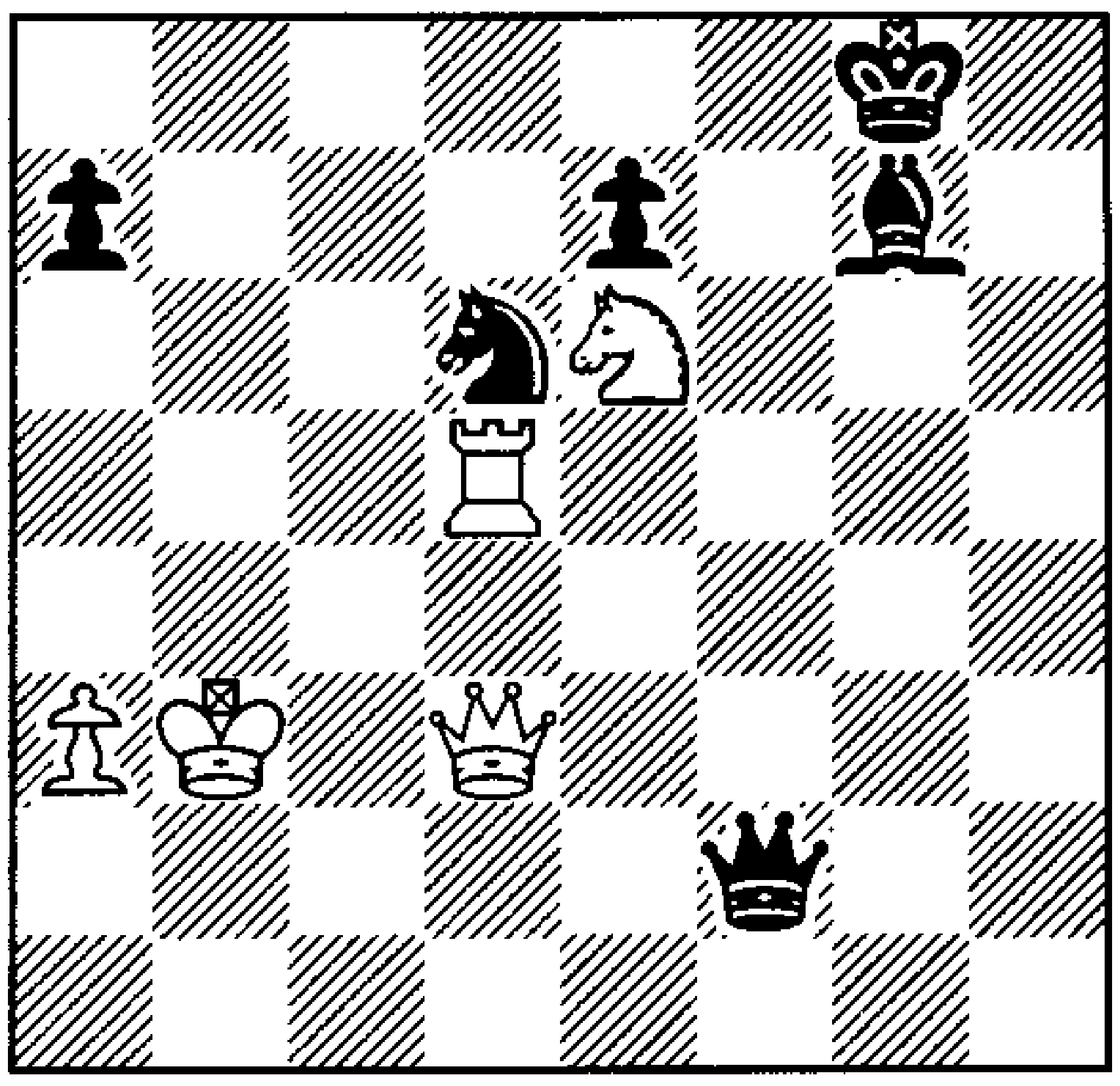
According to Schlechter, better drawing chances were offered by 46...♕a2, but I do not see any great point to this: 47 ♖h5 ♔g7 48 ♘c5 ♘f7 49 ♖d5 etc. The move played is not at all bad: Black still has defensive possibilities, and whether the position is won for White is not so clear.

47 ♘c5 ♕g1+

Perhaps 47...♕g2 should have been played, although this would have been unlikely to make any fundamental difference after 48 ♖e5 ♗g7 49 ♖e1.

48 ♔c2 ♕f2+ 49 ♔b3 ♗g7 50 ♘e6?!

In my opinion, 50 ♔a4 is more accurate.



50...♕b2+?

Another mistake that was not pointed out by anyone! 50...♕b6+! was essential, driving the king back to the kingside: 51 ♔c2 ♕b2+ 52 ♔d1 ♕a1+ 53 ♔e2 ♕b2+ 54 ♔f3 (nothing is achieved by 54 ♕d2 ♕xa3 55 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 or 55 ♖g5 ♕a6+ 56 ♔e1 ♕a1+ with perpetual check) 54...♕f6+ 55 ♘f4 ♘f7. Of course, White will play for a win, but with such a king it is doubtful whether such a result can be achieved.

51 ♔a4 ♔f7?

The last serious error. The only chance was 51...♕g2 52 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 53 ♕d4+ ♔f7 54 ♖c5 when according to Lasker 'White wins', but after 54...♕e2! (instead of the fatal 54...♕b7? 55 ♕d5+ ♕xd5 56 ♖xd5 ♔e6 57 ♖a5 ♘c8 58 ♔b4 ♔d6 59 ♔c4) this still has to be demonstrated. White's king is open, whereas the black knight, defended by a pawn, closely defends its monarch, and it is extremely hard to create a mating construction, for example: 55 ♕d5+ ♔f6 56 ♖c3 ♕a6+ 57 ♔b3 ♕b6+ 58 ♔a2 ♕f2+ 59 ♔b1 ♕f1+ 60 ♖c1 ♕f2 61 ♕c5 ♕e2, and if 62 ♕xa7?, then the reply 62...♕b5+ 63 ♔a2 ♕e2+ equalises the position.

Generally speaking, I am not fully convinced that Lasker was definitely bound to win this ending. One thing is obvious: Schlechter, demoralised by his unfortunate sacrifice 35...♖xf4?, did not exploit all his defensive resources.

52 ♘xg7

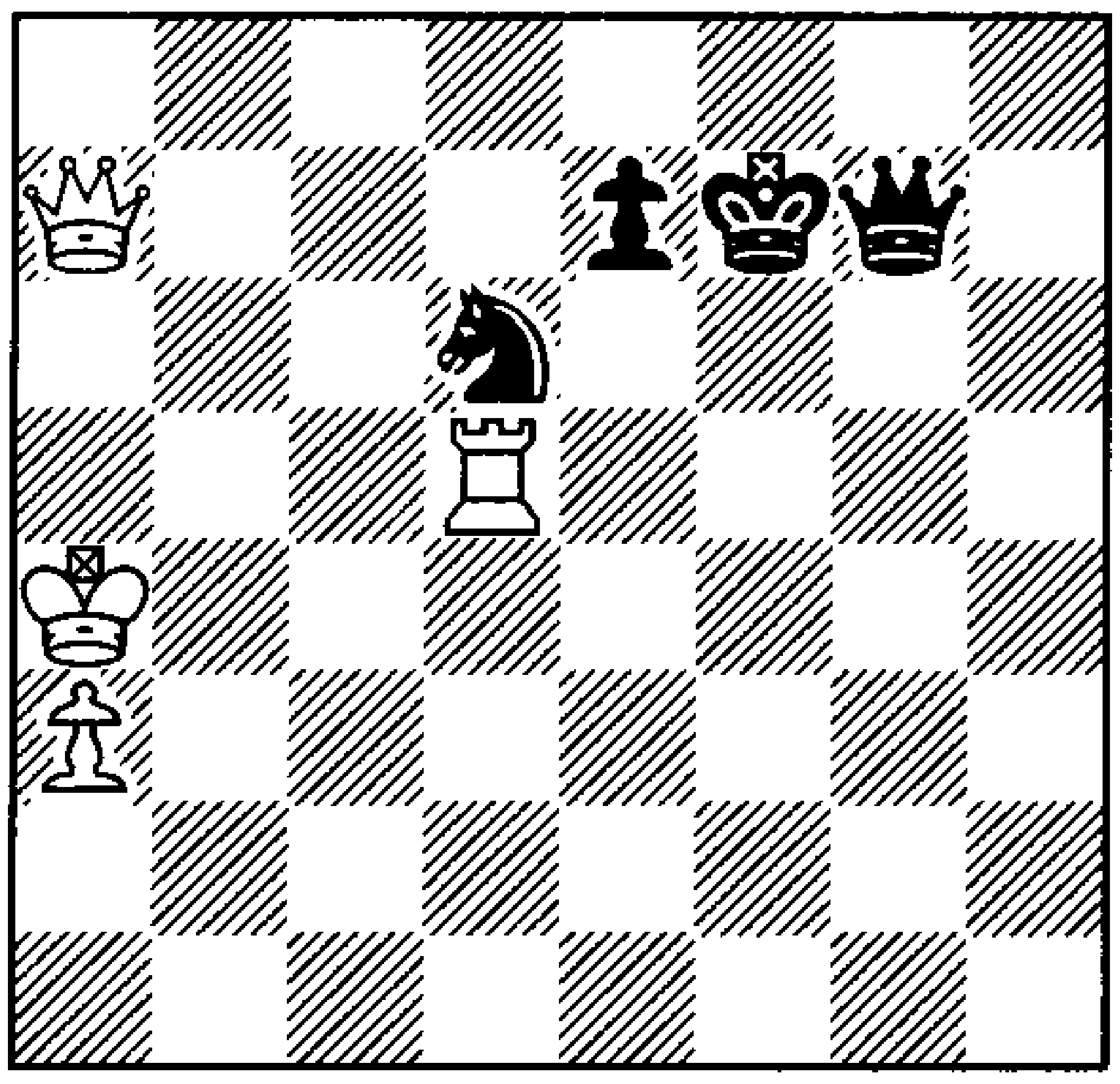
A more intricate plan was 52 ♘g5+ ♔e8 53 ♕g6+ ♔d7 54 ♕f5+ ♔c6 55 ♕d3 ♕a2 56 ♖a5 ♗d4 57 ♘f3 etc.

52...♕xg7 (52...♔xg7 53 ♖g5+ ♔f8 54 ♕f3+) **53 ♕b3 ♔e8**

Or 53...♔f6 54 ♕b2+ ♔f7 55 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 56 ♖a5 ♘c8 57 ♖c5 ♘d6 58 ♖c7 winning.

54 ♕b8+ ♔f7 55 ♕xa7

With the fall of the a7-pawn Black's position is now definitely lost, and he can merely prolong the resistance. Lasker proceeds towards his goal with confident manoeuvres of his heavy pieces.



55...♕g4+

If 55...♘e4, then, if there is nothing better, 56 ♖f5+ ♔e6 57 ♖f3 ♕g4 58 ♕e3 ♔d7 59 ♕f4.

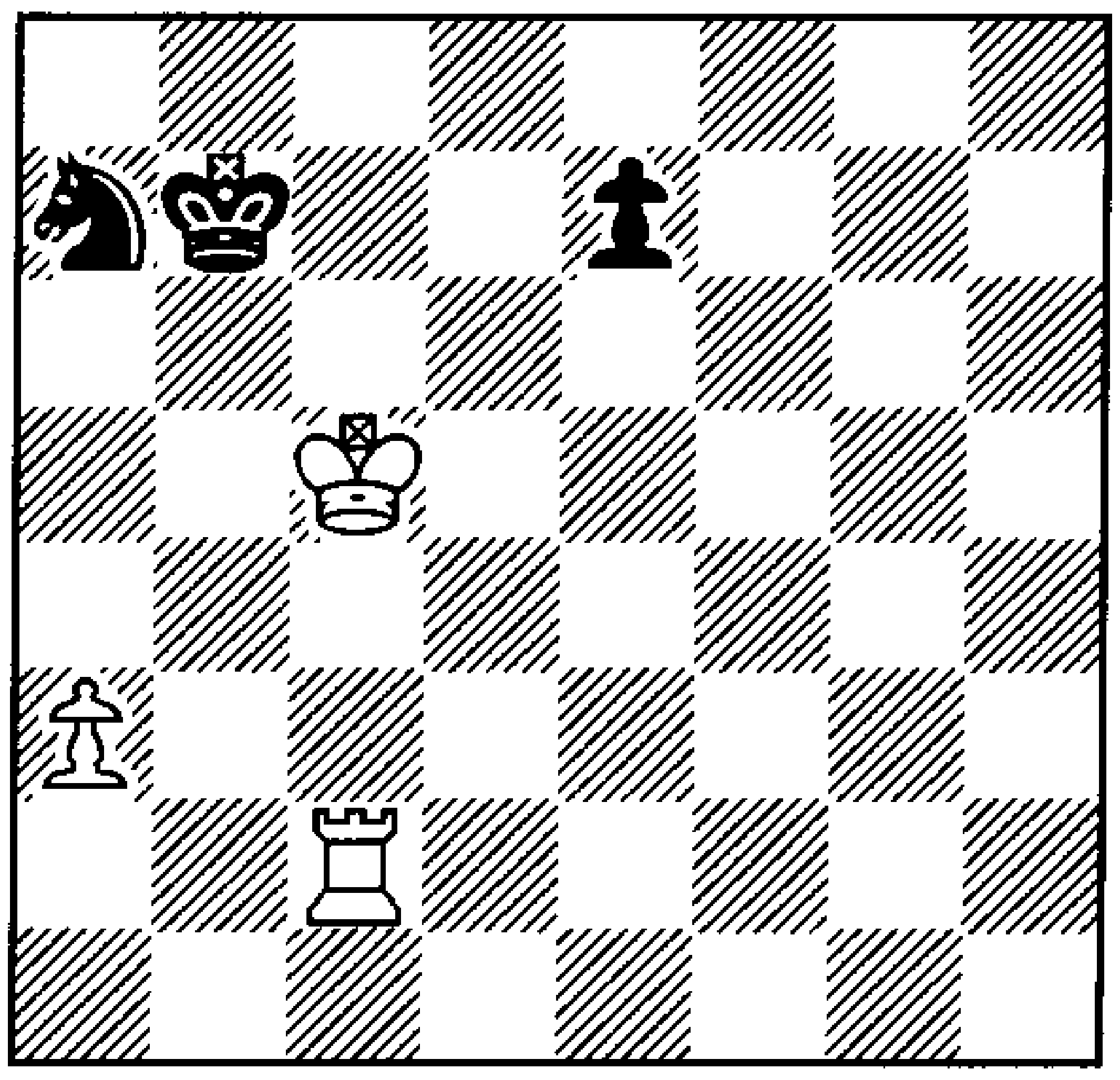
56 ♕d4 ♕d7+ 57 ♔b3 ♕b7+ 58 ♔a2 ♕c6 59 ♕d3 ♔e6 60 ♖g5 ♔d7 61 ♖e5 ♕g2+ 62 ♖e2 ♕g4 63 ♖d2 ♕a4?!

Slightly more tenacious was 63...♕h5 64 ♕d5 ♕h6 65 ♕b7+ (65 ♕f5+) 65...♔e8 66 ♕c6+ ♔d8 67 ♖d3 etc.

64 ♕f5+ ♔c7?!

Capitulation, but also after 64...♔d8 65 ♕e6! the exchange of queens would soon have been forced.

65 ♕c2+ ♕xc2+ 66 ♖xc2+ ♔b7 (or 66...♔d7 67 a4 ♘b7 68 ♔a3, then ♔b4 and a4-a5-a6) **67 ♖e2 ♘c8 68 ♔b3 ♔c6 69 ♖c2+ ♔b7 70 ♔b4 ♘a7 71 ♔c5 1-0**



'He could have defended for a long time yet; a similar ending in one of the La

Bourdonnais-McDonnell games ended in a draw. But nowadays the endgame is played incomparably better.' (Tarrasch)

A titanic battle! Of course, there were many mistakes, but what an intense struggle, and with what inventiveness both sides played! The game was ahead of its time, and the commentaries on it, even later ones, often do not sustain criticism: so complicated and deep were the variations that occurred. Its study, beginning with Schlechter's opening novelty, enables us to follow the development of chess thinking. Whereas nowadays independent play at the board normally begins from the 15th move at least, here it began much earlier, and the value of every move was extremely high. The two players immediately began playing creatively, and the tension was incredible – the game had colossal competitive importance, and therefore all the mistakes, in my view, are excusable.

An outstanding game – and an enormous achievement by Lasker, who managed to achieve a very difficult win. It has to be said that in his best years he always won the decisive games. The ability to accomplish such competitive feats is precisely what distinguishes champions...

And so, this short, fierce duel ended in a draw: 5-5, and Lasker retained the title of world champion.

It can be imagined what an easy stroll the next match for the crown must have seemed to him – with the incorrigible optimist Janowski, whose peak form had long since passed (Berlin 1910). Nardus sacrificed 5,000 Francs, to see his favourite be mercilessly crushed: +8 =3.

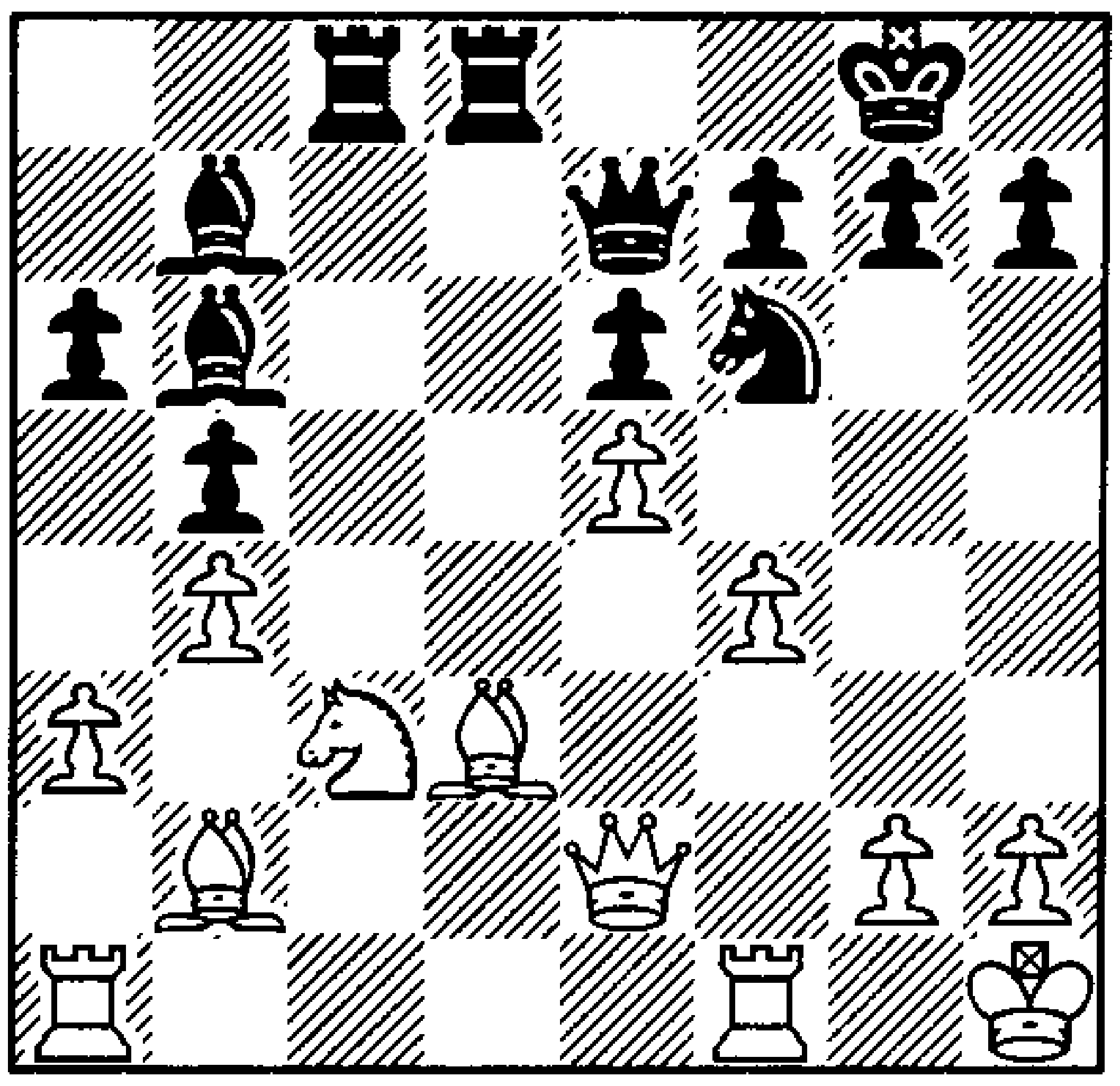
The Great Akiba

In the meantime a new generation of followers of the Steinitz School had resolutely entered the chess arena. And the brightest of them, whose ideas are staggering deep even to this day, was from Poland, the 12th child in a poor teacher's family, Akiba Rubinstein (1882-1961). For the purity and logicality of his style of play, this great chess artist was compared with an ancient sculptor, whose smooth and monumental work provokes admiration...

His first chess book was a modest manual by Sosnitz, written in Modern Hebrew (apart from which, Akiba was also fluent in Polish, Russian and German). He spent his youth in Lodz where there was quite a strong chess society headed by the master Georg Salwe, the first serious opponent of the talented young player.

Rubinstein became a recognised master after his third place in Ostend 1906 (behind Schlechter and Maróczy). He performed even more successfully the following year, winning the master tournament in Ostend 1907, then Carlsbad 1907 and, in his native Lodz, the Fifth All-Russian tournament. Here is virtually his most famous creation:

Game 59
G.Rotlewi-A.Rubinstein
Lodz 1907/08



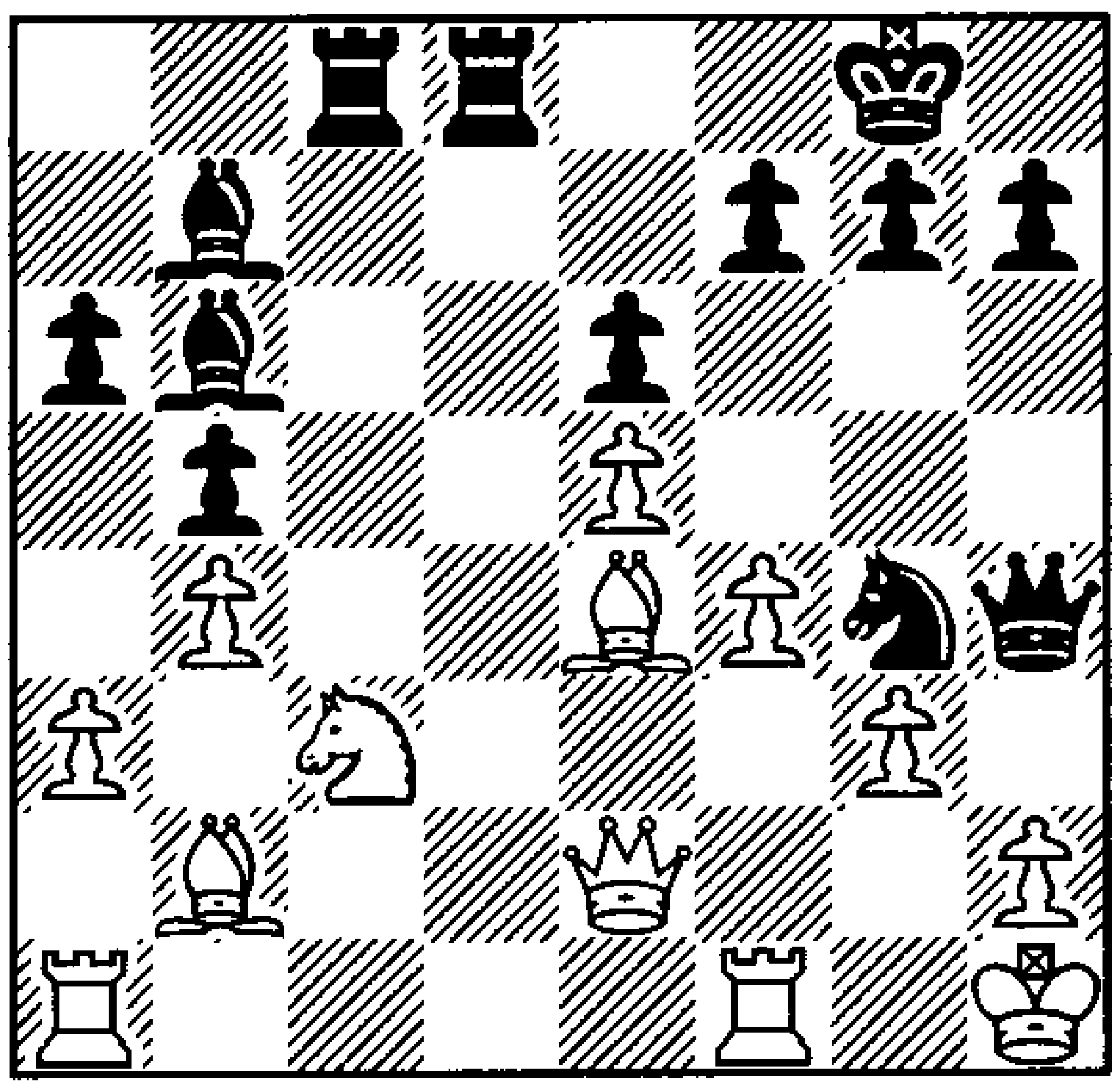
20...♘g4! (in playing 19 e5? ♗b6+ 20 ♔h1 White clearly underestimated this reply) **21 ♗e4**

It transpires that also bad are 21 ♕xg4 ♖xd3, and 21 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 22 ♕xg4 ♖d2, and 21 ♘e4 ♖xd3! 22 ♕xd3 ♗xe4 23 ♕xe4 ♕h4 24 h3 ♕g3 25 hxg4 ♕h4 mate.

21...♕h4 22 g3

22 h3 loses to 22...♖xc3! 23 ♗xc3 (23 ♗xb7 ♖xh3+ and mate; 23 ♕xg4 ♖xh3+! 24 ♕xh3 ♕xh3+ 25 gxh3 ♗xe4+ 26 ♔h2 ♖d2+ 27 ♔g3 ♖g2+ 28 ♔h4 ♗d8+ 29 ♔h5 ♗g6 mate) 23...♗xe4 24 ♕xg4 (24 ♕xe4 ♕g3 wins) 24...♕xg4 25 hxg4 ♖d3! 26 ♔h2 ♖xc3.

But now Black exploits the fatal weakening of the h1-a8 diagonal.



22...♖xc3!!

'One of the best combinations ever made. Black's next, uncommonly spectacular move reveals the depth of Rubinstein's combinative idea.' (Romanovsky)

23 gxh4

The queen has to be taken, since no hopes are offered by either 23 ♗xc3 ♗xe4+ 24 ♕xe4 ♕xh2 mate, or 23 ♗xb7 ♖xg3 24 ♖f3 (24 ♗f3 ♘xh2) 24...♖xf3 25 ♗xf3 ♘f2+ 26 ♔g1 (26 ♔g2 ♕h3+ 27 ♔g1 ♘e4+ 28 ♔h1 ♘g3 mate) 26...♘e4+ 27 ♔f1 ♘d2+ 28 ♔g2 ♘xf3 29 ♕xf3 (29 ♔xf3 ♕h5+) 29...♖d2+.

23...♖d2!!

'Such moves bear the stamp of eternity! Black is a queen down, and nearly all his pieces are en prise,' write Razuvaev and Murakhveri in their book *Akiba Rubinstein* (1980).

24 ♕xd2

After 24 ♕xg4 or 24 ♗xc3 matters are concluded by 24...♗xe4+, while if 24 ♗xb7 – 24...♖xe2 25 ♗g2 ♖h3!!

24...♗xe4+ 25 ♕g2 ♖h3!

In view of the unavoidable ...♖xh2 mate, White resigned. Rubinstein's truly 'immortal' game!

Not without reason did Réti assert that Rubinstein created the most complete examples of chess art in the entire epoch after Steinitz:

'The games of Steinitz himself, the creator of the theory, are by no means the best demonstration of its correctness. A whole generation of chess masters extracted from this theory everything in it that is of value for practical play. Rubinstein was the central figure of this generation, and his games are the most complete embodiment of Steinitz's teaching.'

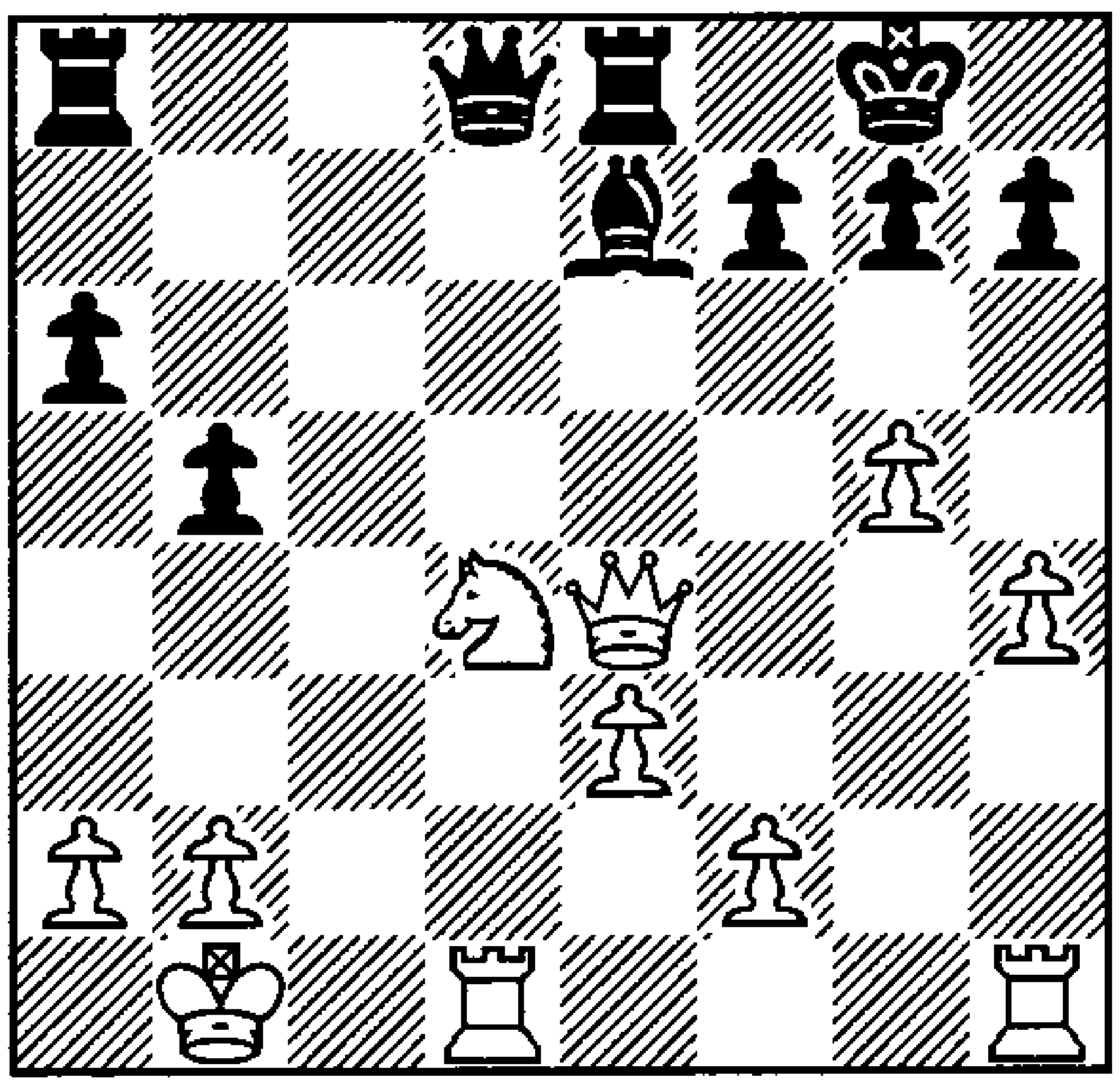
Game 60
A.Rubinstein-R.Teichmann
Match, Vienna 1908, 4th game
Queen's Gambit D61

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♘bd7 5 e3 ♗e7 6 ♘f3 0-0 7 ♕c2!? (one of the first experiences with the formidable 'Rubinstein Attack') **7...b6**

7...c5! is more vigorous, as later occurred in the Lasker-Capablanca match (*Game No.90*).

8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♗d3 ♗b7 10 0-0-0

Alekhine against Yates (Hamburg 1910) preferred 10 h4!? (preventing 10...♘e4) 10...c5 11 0-0-0 cxd4 12 ♘xd4 ♖e8 13 ♔b1 a6 14 g4! b5 15 ♗xf6! ♘xf6 16 g5 ♘e4 17 ♘xe4 dxe4 18 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 19 ♕xe4.



Here Yates took the bait with 19...♗xg5? and after 20 ♘e6! ♕e7 21 hxg5 h6 (21...g6 22 ♖xh7! wins) 22 gxh6 ♕xe6 23 ♕d4 ♕e4+ 24 ♕xe4 ♖xe4 25 hxg7 ♔xg7 26 ♖dg1+ ♔f6 27 ♖h6+ ♔e7 28 ♖c1 ♖a7 29 ♖cc6! he soon laid down his arms.

The most surprising thing is that, three years before this, the position in the diagram, but with the a8 rook at c8, occurred with reversed colours(!) in the game Duz-Khotimirsky-Rubinstein (Lodz 1907), and after (note that for convenience we will recolour the pieces!) 19...♕b6 20 ♕g4 ♗f8 21 ♖c1 it took a long time for Akiba to convert his extra pawn.

10...c5

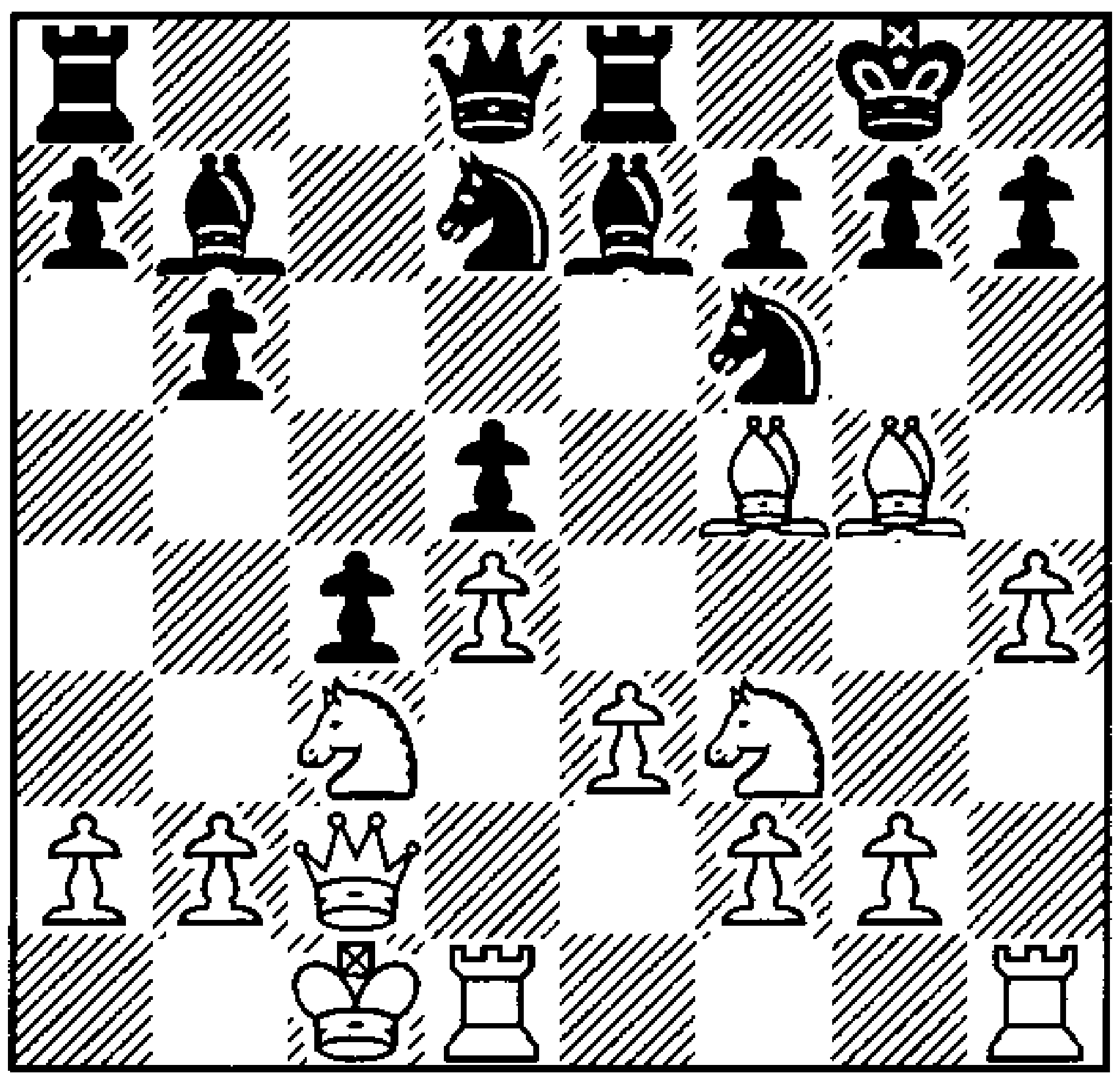
10...♘e4!? needs testing. The game Rubinstein-Znosko-Borovsky (St Petersburg 1909) went 11 h4! f5 12 ♔b1 c5!? (inferior is 12...h6 13 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 14 ♘xe4 dxe4 15 ♕xc7 ♗d5 16 ♗c4!) 13 dxc5 bxc5? (13...♘dxc5? 14 ♘xd5!, but after 13...♖c8! 14 cxb6 ♘xb6 15 ♘d4 White's advantage is not great) 14 ♘xe4! (following the motifs of the well-known game Steinitz-Anderssen, Vienna 1873) 14...fxe4 15 ♗xe4! dxe4 16 ♕b3+ ♔h8 17 ♕xb7 exf3 18 ♖xd7 ♕e8 19 ♖xe7 ♕g6+ 20 ♔a1 ♖ab8 21 ♕e4 ♕xe4 22 ♖xe4 and White won.

11 h4! c4?!

A dubious novelty. In Carlsbad (1907) Teichmann lost after 11...♖c8 12 ♔b1 ♖e8 (as we have seen, Black fails to equalise after 12...cxd4 13 ♘xd4) 13 dxc5! ♖xc5?! (13...♘xc5? 14 ♗f5 ♘cd7 15 ♗xf6) 14 ♘d4 ♘e4?! (14...a6!) 15 ♗xe4 dxe4 16 ♘db5! ♗a6 17 ♕a4 ♗xb5 18 ♘xb5 ♗xg5 19 hxg5 ♖e7 (19...♕xg5 20 ♘d6 ♖e7 21 ♕xa7) 20 ♖d4 (I like 20 ♘xa7!? ♕c7 21 ♘b5 ♕c6 22 ♖d6! ♕xb5 23 ♕a8+ ♘f8 24 ♖d8 winning) 20...♕a8 (or 20...♖xg5 21 ♖hd1 ♕e8 22 ♘c7 b5 23 ♕xa7) 21 b4! ♖c8?! (21...♖xg5 22 ♖c1!) 22 ♘d6 b5?? (22...♖d8) 23 ♘xc8! 1-0.

However, 13...bxc5! is clearly better. Here, in the opinion of grandmaster Razuvaev, 'White has an interesting way to develop his initiative: 14 ♗xf6! ♘xf6 15 ♘g5 h6 – if 15...g6 very strong is 16 ♗b5 ♖f8 17 h5 with an attack (*but in my opinion after 17...♕b6 the situation is unclear – G. K.*) 16 ♗b5 (*16 ♗c4 ♗d6 – G. K.*) 16...♖f8, and now both 17 ♗c4 and 17 e4 give White the advantage.' Excuse me, but after 17 e4 the simple 17...g6! is alright, while if 17 ♗c4!, then again 17...g6, and in the variation 18 ♘ge4 ♘xe4 19 ♘xd5 ♘xf2 20 ♕xf2 ♔g7 21 ♘f6 ♗xf6 22 ♖xd8 ♖cxd8 Black has reasonable compensation for the queen.

12 ♗f5 ♖e8 (with the intention of ...♘f8)



13 ♗xf6! ♘xf6 14 g4 ♗d6 15 g5 ♘e4 16 h5!

Rubinstein's play, as always, is consistent and logical: in the given instance he is thinking only of attack! The following line was completely unclear and unnecessary for White: 16 ♘xe4 dxe4 17 ♘d2 c3! 18 ♘xe4 cxb2+ 19 ♔xb2 (19 ♔b1 ♗a3) 19...♗b4 20 f3 ♕d5 21 ♗xh7+ ♔h8.

16...♕e7

If 16...♘xg5?! 17 ♘xg5 ♕xg5 Tarrasch suggested 18 ♗xh7+ ♔f8 19 h6! gxh6 20 ♖dg1.

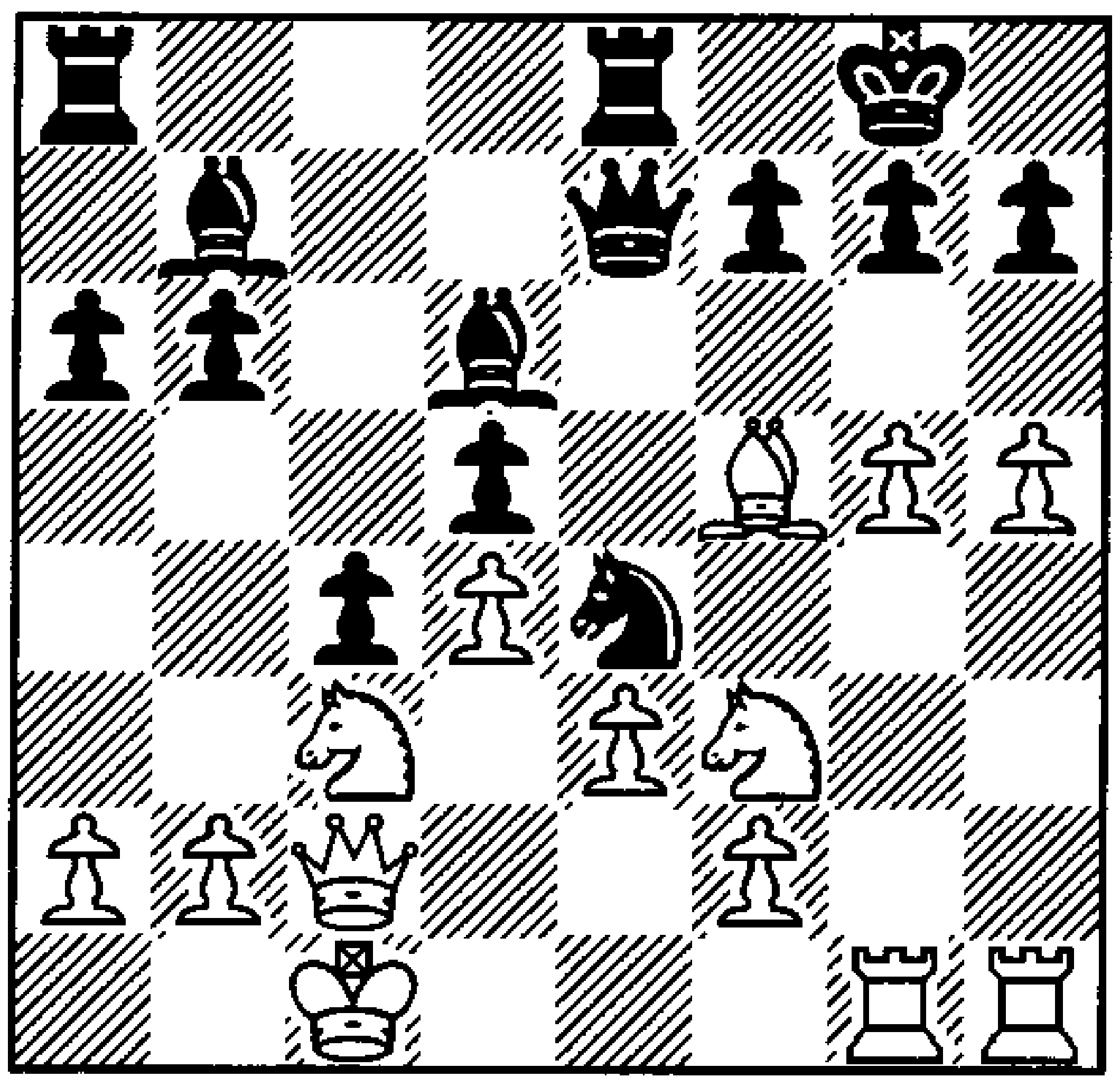
17 ♖dg1 a6?

Most probably the decisive mistake: the counterattack is too late. Essential was 17...g6 (but not 17...♘xf2?! 18 ♕xf2 ♕xe3+ 19 ♕xe3 ♖xe3 20 ♖f1) 18 hxg6 hxg6. Now, according to analysis by Razuvaev, two dangerous continuations have to be considered:

1) 19 ♗xe4 dxe4 20 ♘d2 ♖ac8 21 ♖h4

'and it is difficult for Black to defend' – yes, difficult, but after 21...♔g7! still quite possible;

2) 19 ♗xg6!? fxg6 20 ♖h6 ♔g7 (*? – G. K.*) 21 ♘h4 'with a strong attack' – in my view it is simply decisive: 21...♖h8 22 ♘xg6 ♕d7 23 ♘xh8 ♖xh8 24 f3! But after 20...♕g7! 21 ♘h4 ♖e6 22 ♘xe4 dxe4 23 ♘f5! gxf5 24 ♖xe6 ♗e7 25 ♕xc4 ♔f8 26 ♕b5 White still has work to do.



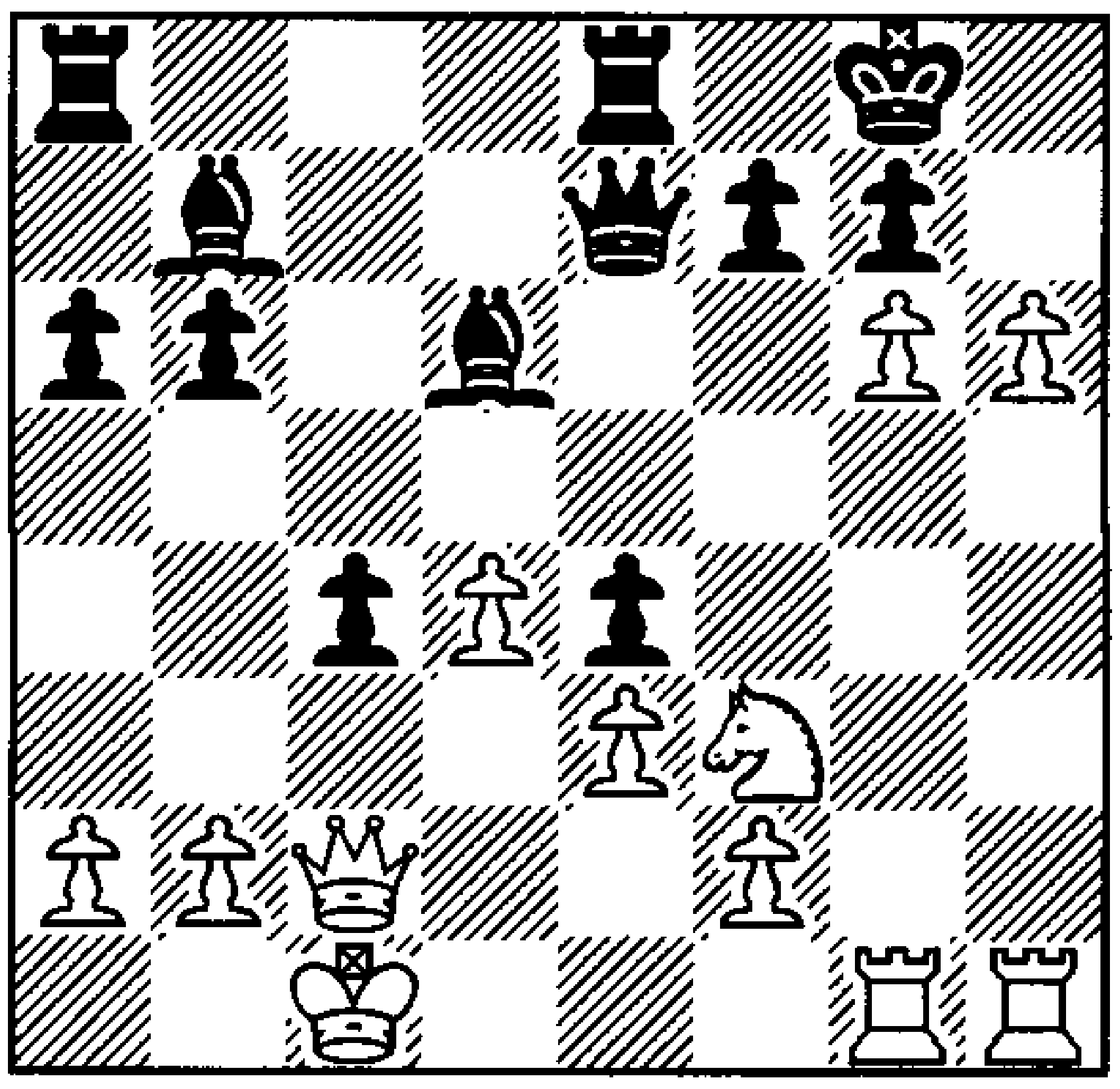
18 ♗xh7+!!

'Like lightning from a clear sky! Such a combination cannot be calculated to the end, and this is the main difficulty in taking a decision in similar situations.' (Razuvaev)

19...♔xh7 19 g6+ ♔g8

If 19...fxg6? Tarrasch gives 20 ♘xe4 dxe4 21 ♘g5+ ♔h6 (21...♔g8 22 ♕xc4+) 22 hxg6+ ♔xg6 23 ♘xe4+ ♔f7 24 ♕xc4+, while I would add 22 ♘f7+!, mating.

20 ♘xe4 dxe4 21 h6!!



'The crux of White's attack! Black cannot prevent the opening of both the g- and h-files, after which the white rooks quickly decide matters. 22 gxf7+ and ♖xg7+ is now threatened.' (Euwe) This impressive picture is the culmination of the entire game.

21...f6

'If 21...exf3 there would have followed 22 gxf7+ ♕xf7 (22...♔xf7 23 ♕g6+ ♔g8 24 hxg7) 23 hxg7! with the double threat of ♖h8 mate and ♕h7 mate.' (Euwe) 21...fxg6 is much more interesting, for example:

1) 22 ♖xg6? exf3 23 ♕xc4+ (even worse is 23 ♖xg7+?! ♕xg7 24 hxg7 ♗e4! 25 ♕xc4+ ♔xg7 26 ♖g1+ ♔f6) 23...♔h7! 24 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 25 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 with dangerous counterplay;

2) 22 h7+ ♔f7 (22...♔h8? 23 ♘h4 wins) 23 ♘h4! (after 23 ♘g5+ ♔f6 the attack comes to a standstill) 23...g5 24 ♘f5 ♕f6 (or 24...♕e6 25 ♖xg5 g6 26 ♖h6!) 25 ♖xg5 ♕xg5 26 ♘xd6+ ♔e7 27 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 28 ♕xc4! ♔d6 29 ♕g8 winning;

3) 22 ♘h4!? was recommended by Razuvaev. The computer gives it the green light: 22...g5 23 ♘g6 ♕f6 24 h7+ ♔f7 25 h8♕ ♖xh8 26 ♘xh8+ ♔f8 27 ♖h5 and wins.

22 hxg7! exf3

'22...♕e6 is not possible on account of 23 ♖h8+ ♔xg7 24 ♖h7+ ♔f8 25 ♖xb7 exf3 26 g7+ ♔g8 27 ♕h7+ and mate in two moves.' (Euwe) I should add that after 24...♔g8 White wins by both 25 ♖xb7 exf3 26 ♖h1 f5 27 g7 ♗e7 28 ♖xb6! ♕xb6 (28...♕f7 29 ♖bh6) 29 ♕xf5 and 25 ♖gh1 f5 26 ♘g5! ♕d5 27 ♖xb7 (or 27 ♘f7!? ♗f8 28 f4!! exf3 29 ♕h2 f2 30 ♖h8+ ♔g7 31 ♕h6+ ♔f6 32 g7+ ♔e7 33 g8♘+ ♔d7 34 ♘f6+ ♔c6 35 ♖xf8 ♖e6 36 a4!? ♖xf8 37 ♘e5+) 27...♕xb7 28 ♕e2! ♕d5 (or 28...♕c7 29 ♖h7) 29 ♕h5 ♔g7 30 ♕h6+ ♔f6 31 ♘h7+ ♔e7 32 ♕g7+ ♔d8 33 ♘f6 ♗f8 34 ♖h8 ♕d6 35 ♕f7 ♕e7 36 ♕xe8+ ♕xe8 37 ♘xe8 ♔xe8 38 g7.

23 ♖h8+ ♔xg7 24 ♖h7+ ♔g8 25 ♕f5!

The concluding blow: White has a mass of threats, beginning with ♕h5.

25...c3 (desperation) **26 ♖xe7 1-0**

An enormous impression on the chess world was made by Rubinstein's performance at the Chigorin Memorial, the strong international tournament in St Petersburg (1909). He started with 4 out of 4, and among those defeated – and in what style! – was the world champion himself.

Game 61

A.Rubinstein-Em.Lasker

St Petersburg 1909, 3rd round

Queen's Gambit D32

1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 c4 e6 4 ♗g5!?

After 4 ♘c3 Lasker used to play both 4...♗e7 and 4...c5 (*Game Nos. 41, 42*). 'Rubinstein, who had made a special study of the Queen's Gambit and was convinced that the "orthodox" defence was unsatisfactory, very cleverly led the game to a position similar to this defence.' (Tarrasch)

4...c5?!

The champion avoids the Rubinstein attack – 4...♗e7 5 ♘c3 ♘bd7 6 e3 0-0 7 ♕c2, with which in the first round his opponent had crushed Znosko-Borovsky, and a year earlier Teichmann (*Game No.60*). But now Black reaches not the most favourable position with an 'isolani'.

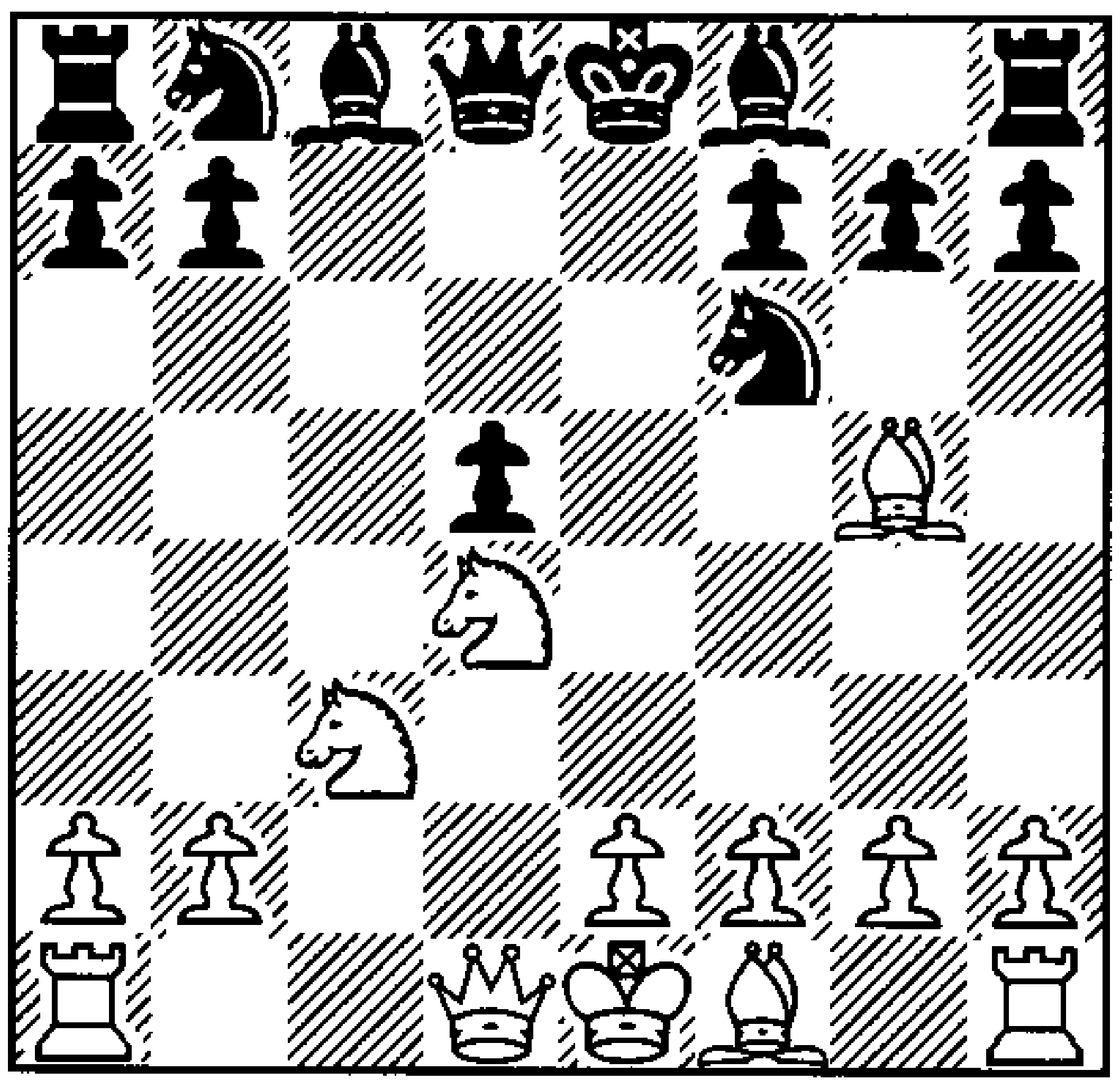
5 cxd5 exd5 6 ♘c3 cxd4

Avoiding getting involved in the discussion which a year earlier flared up in Marshall's games with Salwe and Rubinstein in the variation 6...♗e7 7 dxc5! ♗e6.

After the simultaneous-like move 6...c4?! White has both 7 ♗xf6! and 7 e4!? If 6...♘c6 Black again has to reckon with 7 ♗xf6. Finally, after 6...♗e6, which occurred between McDonnell and La Bourdonnais back in London 1834, Lasker himself was successful with 7 e3, or even, as later also played by Alekhine, 7 e4!?

7 ♘xd4

Lilienthal's idea 7 ♗xf6!? gxf6 8 ♕xd4 ♗e6 9 e4 ♘c6 10 ♗b5 dxe4 11 ♕xe4 is interesting. True, here White has to reckon with the sharp 7...♕xf6 8 ♘xd5 ♕d8 9 ♕xd4 ♘c6 and 10...♗e6, in the spirit of the Schara-Hennig Gambit. The luring of the opponents into similar, often dubious but 'chancy' positions was a typical Lasker trait!



7...♘c6?!

'An inaccuracy that leads to difficulties. Correct is 7...♗e7 8 e3 0-0, when Black has no weak points.' (Lasker) But, as is shown by the experience of the 20th century, after 9 ♗e2 or 9 ♗d3 he still has to fight for equality.

8 e3

Here if 8 e4 there is the good reply 8...♗c5! 9 ♘xc6 bxc6 10 exd5 0-0! According to Tarrasch, dangerous is 8 ♗xf6!? ♕xf6 9 ♘db5 (not 9 ♘xd5?? ♕xd4) 9...♗b4 'with advantage to Black', but after 10 ♘c7+ ♔f8 11 ♘xd5 White is simply a pawn up. As, however, he also is after 9...♕e5 10 ♘xd5 ♗b4+ 11 ♘xb4 ♕xb5 12 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 13 ♖c1 ♕b6 14 ♕a4+ ♗d7 15 ♕a3!

8...♗e7 (in the event of 8...♗b4 9 ♖c1 or 9 ♗b5 the pin on the f6 knight is unpleasant) **9 ♗b5! ♗d7 10 ♗xf6**

'The pawn is won only temporarily. 10 0-0 was more solid, after which the d-pawn would all the same have been bound to fall.' (Lasker)

10...♗xf6 11 ♘xd5 ♗xd4

11...♗e5?! does not give compensation for the pawn after the reply 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♗xc6 bxc6 14 ♘c3 ♖e8 15 ♕d2 ♕c7 16 ♘f3 ♗f6 17 ♖ac1 etc.

12 exd4

12...♕g5! (the only way of creating definite counterplay) **13 ♗xc6**

Of course, not 13 ♘c7+? ♔d8 14 ♘xa8 ♕xb5.

13...♗xc6 14 ♘e3

Less is promised by 14 ♕e2+ (14 ♘c7+? ♔d7 15 ♘xa8 ♖e8+) 14...♔d7 15 ♘e3 ♗xg2 16 ♖g1 ♕a5+ 17 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 18 ♔xd2 ♗e4 with equality (if 19 ♖xg7, then 19...♗g6).

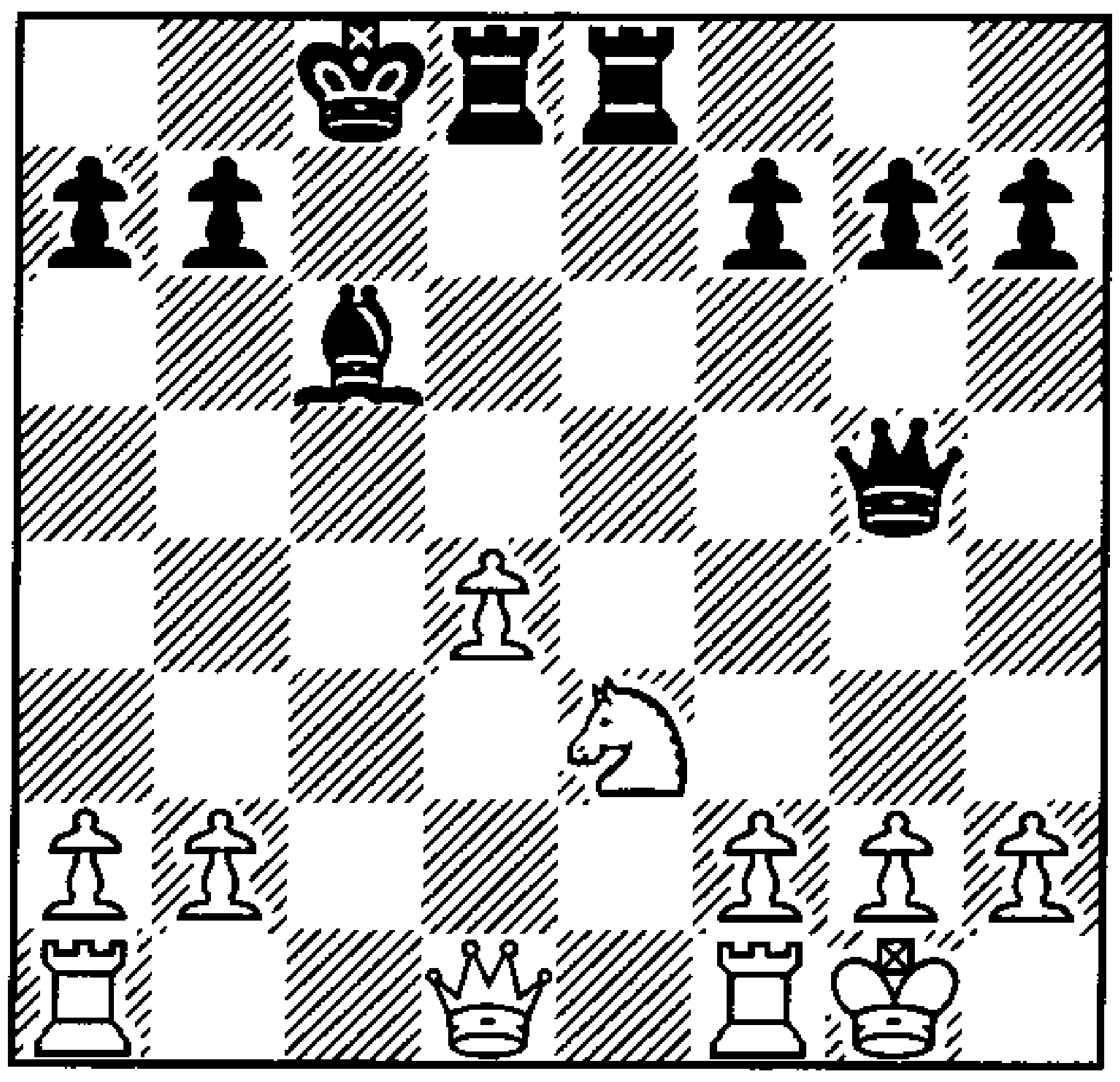
14...0-0-0?!

Later Lasker suggested 14...♗xg2 15 ♖g1 (but not 15 ♘xg2? ♕xg2 16 ♕e2+ ♔d8 17 0-0-0 ♕g6 with an excellent game: 18 ♕d3 ♖c8+ 19 ♔b1 ♖e8 etc.) 15...♕a5+ 16 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 17 ♔xd2 ♗e4, but Bernstein showed that by 18 ♖g4! (18 ♖xg7? ♗g6) 18...♗g6 19 f4 White retains some advantage (for my part, I should like to add 19...♖d8 20 f5 ♗h5 21 ♖h4 ♗f3 22 ♖g1).

More interesting is Razuvaev's recommendation 14...0-0! 15 0-0 ♖ad8 with quite good compensation for the pawn.

15 0-0 ♖he8

With the obvious threat of ...♖xe3.



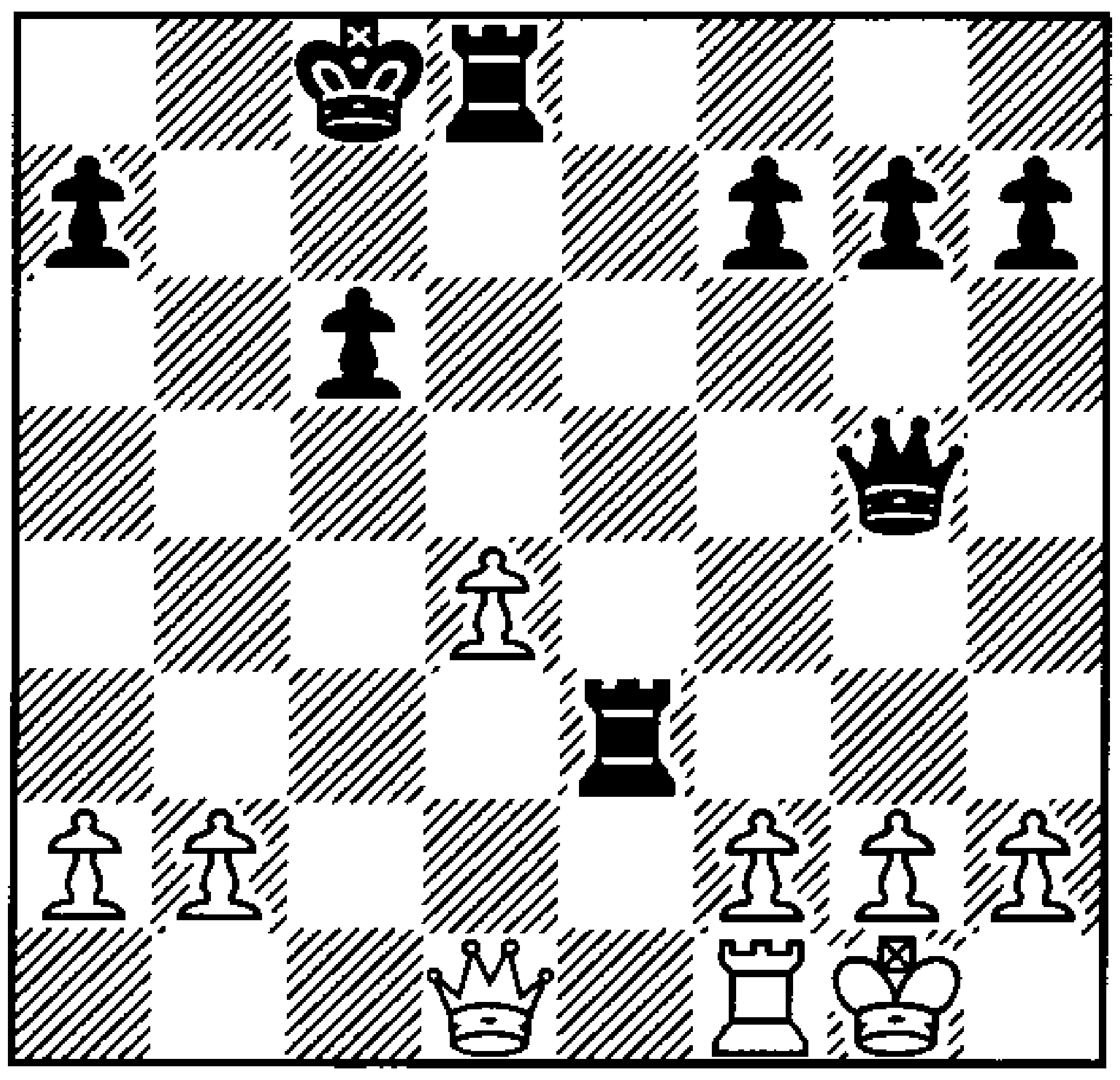
16 ♖c1!!

I agree with Lasker: unusually subtle! The threat is ♖c5 and d4-d5.

16...♖xe3

'Also after 16...♔b8 17 ♖c5 (*passive is 17 ♕d2 ♖e4! 18 ♖cd1, but not 18 d5? ♖xd5 – G. K.*) 17...♕f4 18 d5 ♖xe3 19 ♕c1! ♖e4 20 dxc6 bxc6 21 ♕c3 Black would have stood badly.' (Lasker) But it seems to me that better is 17...♕xc5! 18 dxc5 ♖xd1 19 ♖xd1 a5 with hopes of saving the endgame.

17 ♖xc6+ bxc6



18 ♕c1!!

'This is the crux of the matter! Black had evidently reckoned only on 18 fxe3? ♕xe3+ 19 ♔h1 ♖xd4, which is advantageous for him.' (Tarrasch) It is amusing that Rubinstein also defeated Capablanca with the help of the same queen move (*Game No.64*).

18...♖xd4

According to Lasker, more tenacious was 18...♖e5 19 ♕xc6+ (not 19 f4?! ♖c5!) 19...♔b8 20 dxe5 (not 20 f4?! ♖e6) 20...♕xe5. Razuvaev, after adding 21 ♖c1, writes that 'White still has to overcome considerable technical difficulties.' Even so, from the standpoint of modern chess, his position is objectively won! And even in the obviously secondary variation 20 f4? ♖e6 21 ♕xe6 ♕xg2+ 22 ♔xg2 fxe6, where, according to Razuvaev, 'Black has good drawing chances', after 23 ♖d1 it is not to easy to make a draw.

19 fxe3 ♖d7 (19...♖d6 20 ♖xf7 etc.) **20 ♕xc6+ ♔d8**

If now White delays, his extra pawn will not play any role: after all, his king is also exposed.

21 ♖f4!!

'A wonderful idea. White threatens to decide the game by a direct attack on the king – 22 ♕a8+ and ♖e4+ or ♖c4+. To avoid this Black is forced to allow the exchange of queens and a lost endgame.' (Lasker)

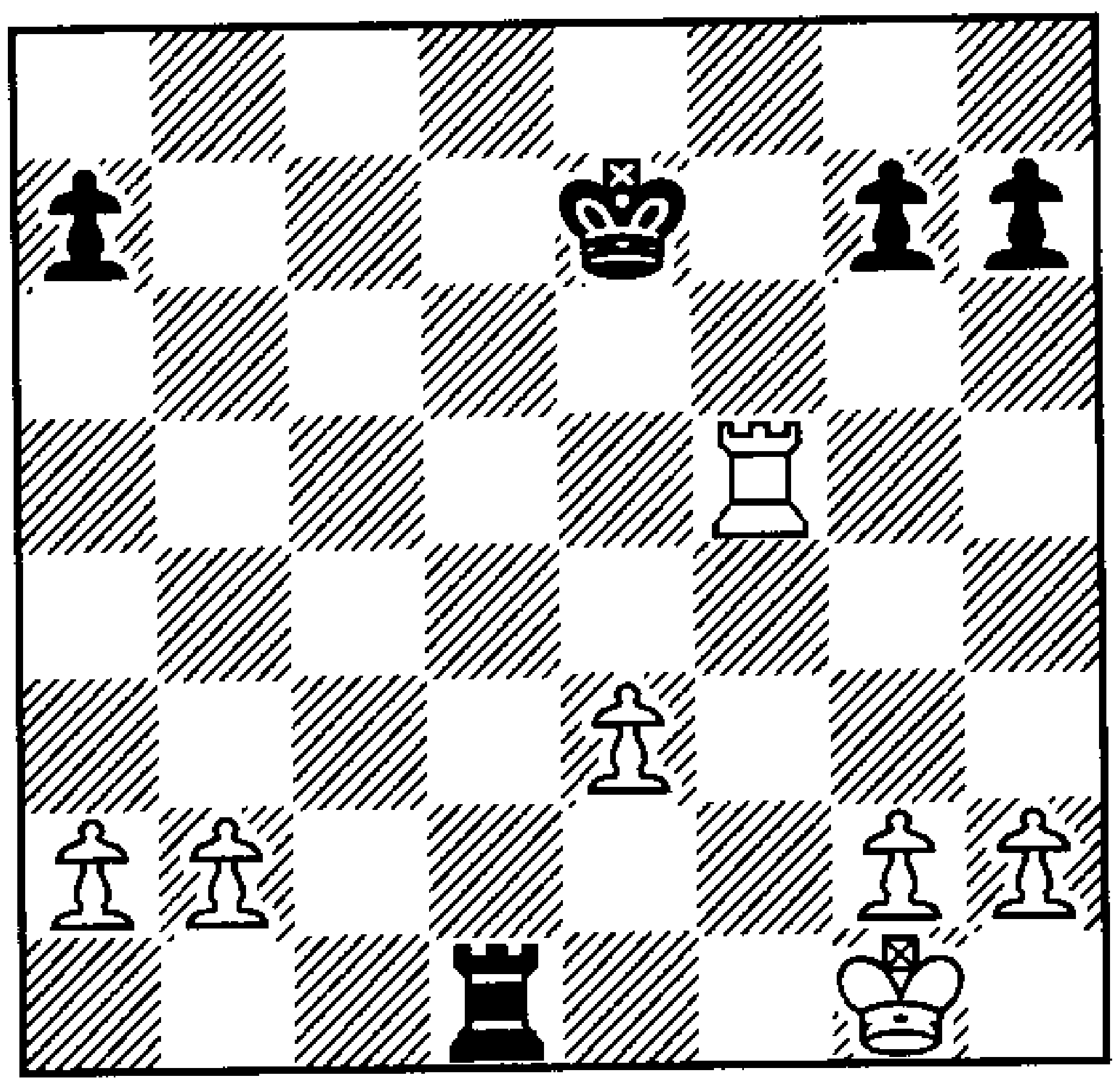
21...f5

'If 21...♕a5, then 22 ♕a8+ ♔e7 (22...♔c7 23 ♖c4+) 23 ♖e4+! ♔f6 24 ♕c6+ ♔g5 25 h4+.' (Lasker) After 21...♖d1+ Tarrasch gave 22 ♔f2 ♖d2+ 23 ♔e1 ♕xg2 24 ♖d4+ ♔e7 25 ♕d6+ and mate; I should like to add 23...♕a5 24 ♖a4 ♖d6+ 25 ♖xa5 ♖xc6 26 ♖xa7 winning. But instead of 22...♖d2+?, in my opinion, better is 22...♕a5! 23 ♕a8+ ♔e7 24 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 25 ♕f3+ ♔e8 26 ♕xd1 ♕xa2 27 ♕h5+ with advantage to White, but Black avoids an immediate rout.

22 ♕c5! (threatening ♕f8+) **22...♕e7**

The only defence: if 22...♖d1+ (22...♕f6 23 ♖d4) 23 ♔f2 ♖d2+ 24 ♔e1 ♕xg2 there follows 25 ♕a5+ and ♕xd2.

23 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 (or 23...♖xe7 24 ♖xf5 ♖xe3 25 ♖f7 winning) **24 ♖xf5 ♖d1+**



25 ♔f2!

After 25 ♖f1?! ♖d2 26 ♖b1 ♖e2 Black would have retained drawing chances (Kmoch).

25...♖d2+ 26 ♔f3 ♖xb2 27 ♖a5! ♖b7 28 ♖a6!

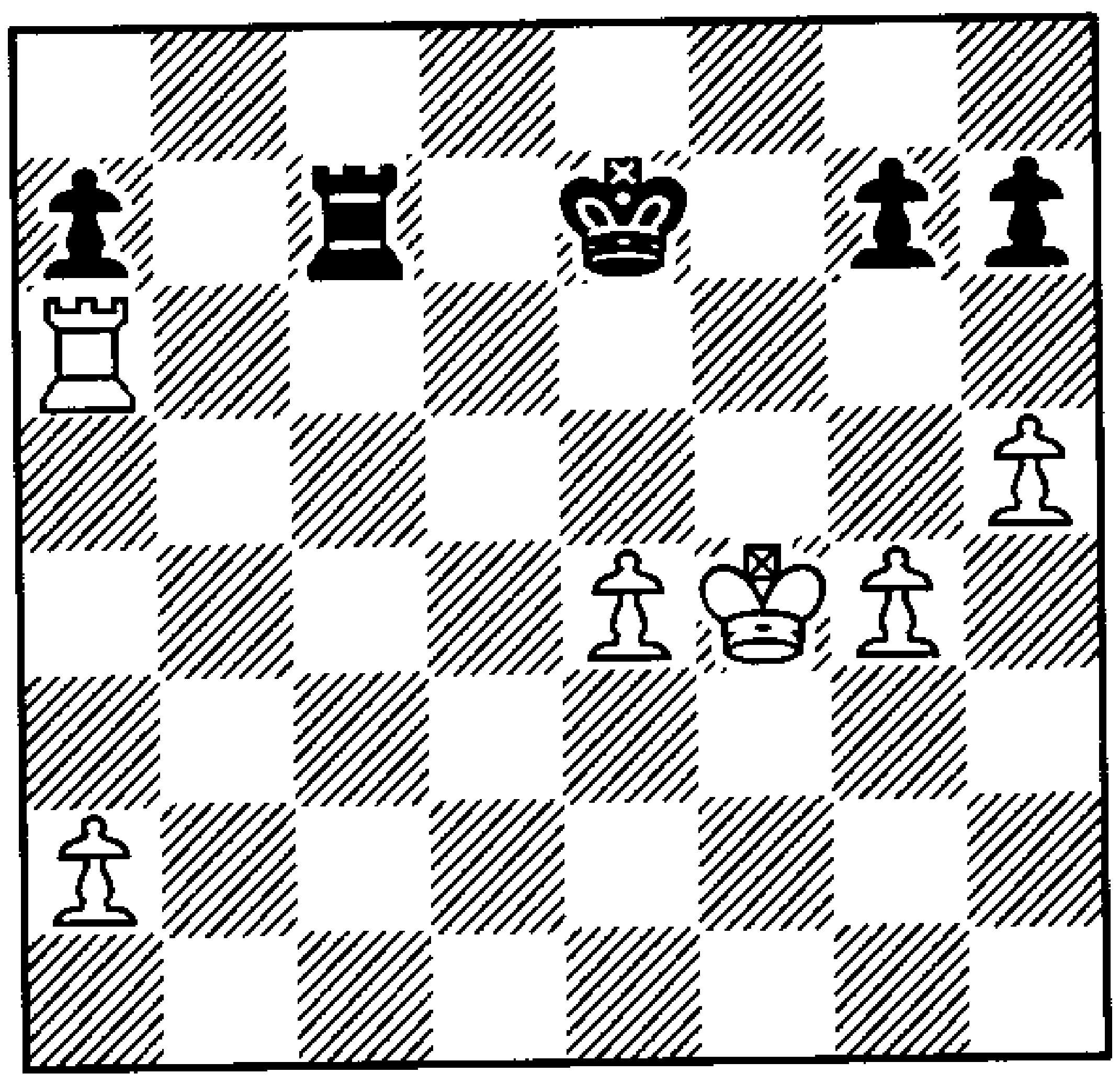
An ideal place for the rook! White creates a textbook rook endgame, one of those wonderful endings that gave birth to Tartakower's well-known aphorism: 'Rubinstein is the rook ending of a chess game, begun by the gods a thousand years ago.'

28...♔f8 29 e4 ♖c7 30 h4!

'Not only a preparation for further activity, but also prophylaxis against ...♖c2.' (Levenfish, Smyslov)

30...♔f7 31 g4 ♔f8 32 ♔f4 ♔e7 33 h5!

With the obvious intention of opening a way for the king.



33...h6

Creating an opening via g6. If 33...♖b7, then 34 g5 ♖c7 35 e5 ♖b7 36 ♔f5 ♖c7 37 g6! h6 38 a4 ♖b7 39 ♖e6+! ♔d7 (39...♔f8 40 ♖c6 ♔e7 41 ♖c8 and ♖g8) 40 ♖f6! ♔e8 41 ♖f7! ♖xf7+ 42 gxf7+ ♔xf7 43 e6+ ♔e7 44 ♔e5 wins (Lasker).

The result is roughly the same after 33...♔d8 34 e5 ♔e8 35 g5 ♖c4+ 36 ♔f5 ♖c7 37 g6 h6 38 ♖e6+! or 33...♔f7 34 ♔f5 (also possible is 34 h6 gxh6 35 ♖xh6 ♔g7 36 ♖a6 ♔f7 37 ♔f5 ♖e7 38 e5 ♖b7 39 ♖c6 followed by a4-a5-a6 winning) 34...♔e7 35 g5 ♔f7 36 e5 ♔e7 37 g6 h6 38 ♖e6+! ♔f8 (38...♔d7 39 ♖f6! ♔e8 40 ♖f7 etc.) 39 ♖d6 ♔e7 40 ♖a6 ♔d7 (40...♖b7 41 ♖c6 ♖d7 42 ♖c8 and ♖g8) 41 ♖f6! (Lisitsyn).

34 ♔f5 ♔f7 35 e5 ♖b7 36 ♖d6 ♔e7

Equally hopeless are both 36...♖c7 37 ♖d7+! ♖xd7 38 e6+ ♔e7 39 exd7 ♔xd7 40 ♔g6 and, as we will see, 36...♔f8.

37 ♖a6

The last move before the time control (which was 2½ hours for 37 moves, 1½ hours for the next 23 moves, and then one hour for 15 every moves). White is not in a hurry to go in for the forcing variation 37 ♔g6 ♖b4 (37...♖b5 38 ♖a6; 37...♔f8 38 ♖d8+ ♔e7 39

♖g8 winning) 38 ♔xg7 ♖xg4+ 39 ♔xh6 ♖e4 40 ♖a6 ♖xe5 41 ♔g6 and wins.

37...♔f7 38 ♖d6 ♔f8 39 ♖c6!?

Lasker also considered 39 ♖d8+ ♔f7 (if 39...♔e7 White wins by both 40 ♖a8 ♔f7 41 a4 and 40 ♖g8 ♔f7 41 ♖c8 ♔e7 42 a4 ♖d7 43 ♖g8 ♔f7 44 e6+!) 40 e6+ ♔e7 41 ♖d7+! (but not 41 ♖g8? ♖b5+ 42 ♔g6 ♖g5+ 43 ♔h7 ♖xg4 44 ♖xg7+ ♖xg7+ 45 ♔xg7 ♔xe6 46 ♔xh6 ♔f6 with a draw).

39...♔f7 40 a3! 1-0

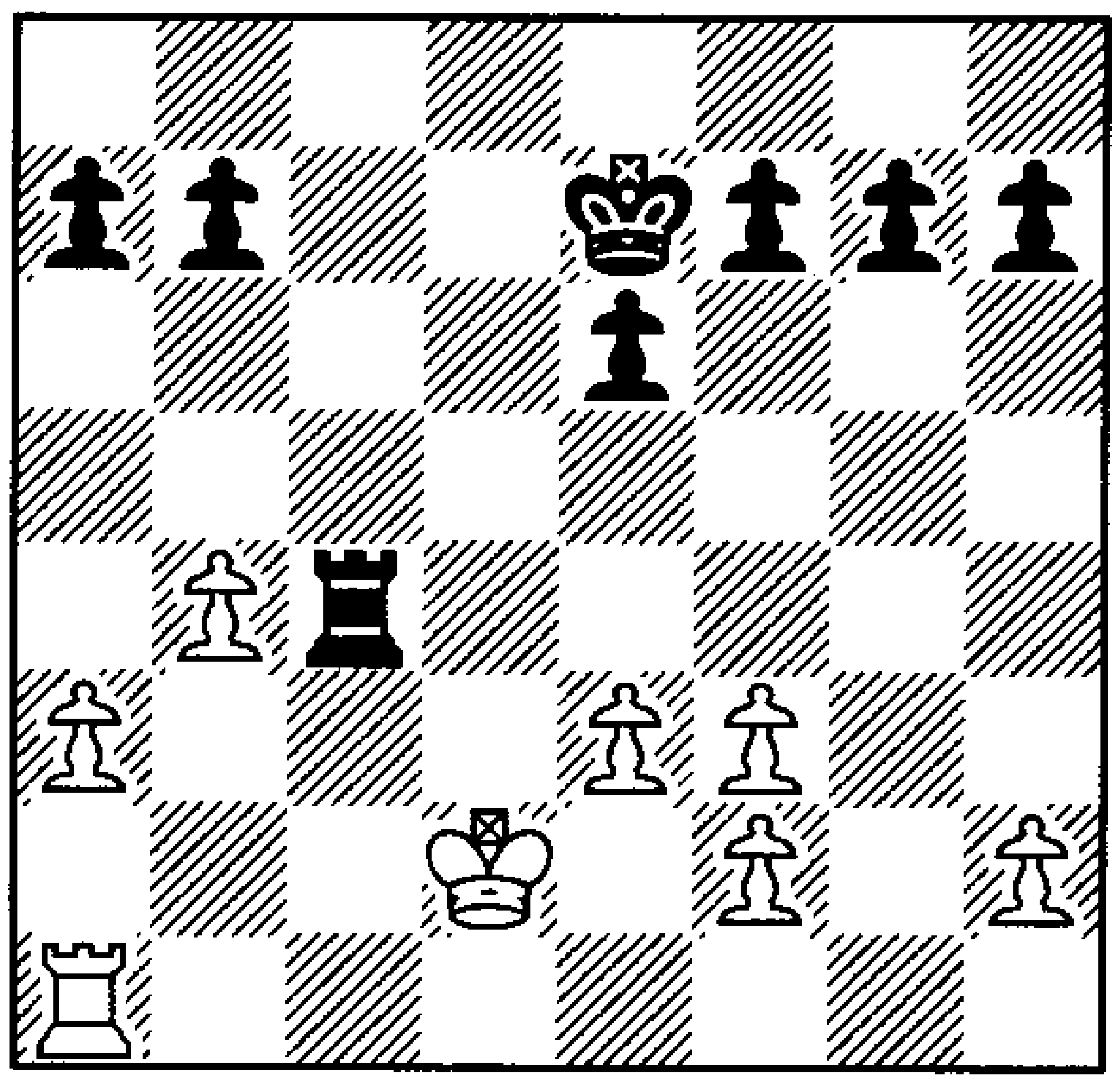
Taking away a square from the rook. Black is in zugzwang: 40...♖e7 41 e6+ ♔g8 42 ♔g6 ♖e8 43 e7! ♔h8 44 ♖d6 and ♖d8; 40...♔f8 41 ♔g6 ♖b3 42 ♖c8+ ♔e7 43 ♖c7+ ♔e6 44 ♖xg7; 40...♔e7 41 ♔g6 ♔d7 (41...♔f8 42 ♖c8+) 42 ♖d6+ ♔e8 43 ♔h7 ♔f8 44 ♖d8+ ♔f7 45 ♖g8 and ♖xg7.

An historic game, without question. But let's see what the 'great Akiba' accomplished later. In the ninth round, with 7 points out of 8, he unexpectedly lost to the Russian master Duz-Khotimirsky (who in the 16th round also defeated Lasker!) and... as if nothing had happened he immediately began a new spurt.

Game 62

E.Cohn-A.Rubinstein

St Petersburg 1909, 10th round



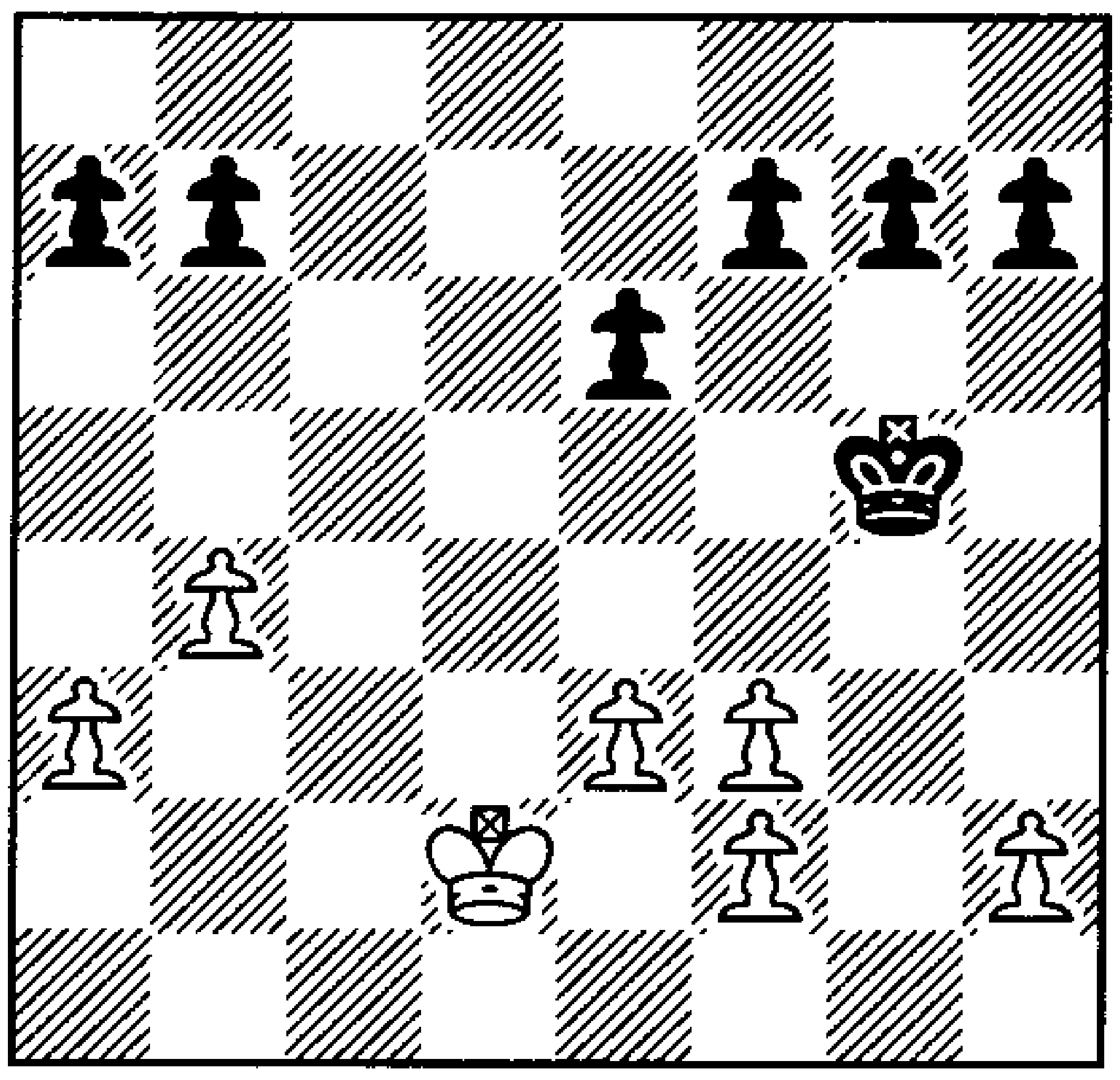
24 ♖c1?

Of course, White should have played 24 f4 (preventing ...♖h4) 24...b5 25 ♔d3 with good drawing chances. 'Cohn, however, assumed that the pawn ending was the simplest way of securing this result.' (Levenfish, Smyslov)

24...♖xc1 25 ♔xc1 ♔f6!

'Rubinstein, an outstanding master of the endgame, begins an attack on the h2-pawn, which proves decisive.' (Levenfish, Smyslov) 'An attack with insignificant means, but splendidly conducted.' (Lasker)

26 ♔d2 ♔g5



27 ♔e2

'The counterattack on the queenside is too slow: after 27 ♔d3 ♔h4 28 ♔c4 ♔h3 Black has time to pick up the h2-pawn and queen his own h-pawn. Here it is important only that in reply to ♔c7 he should play ...b7-b5.' (Averbakh, Maizelis)

27...♔h4 28 ♔f1 ♔h3 29 ♔g1

'The white king is tied to the defence of the h-pawn. He is powerless against the impending black pawn offensive on the kingside.' (Levenfish, Smyslov)

29...e5! 30 ♔h1

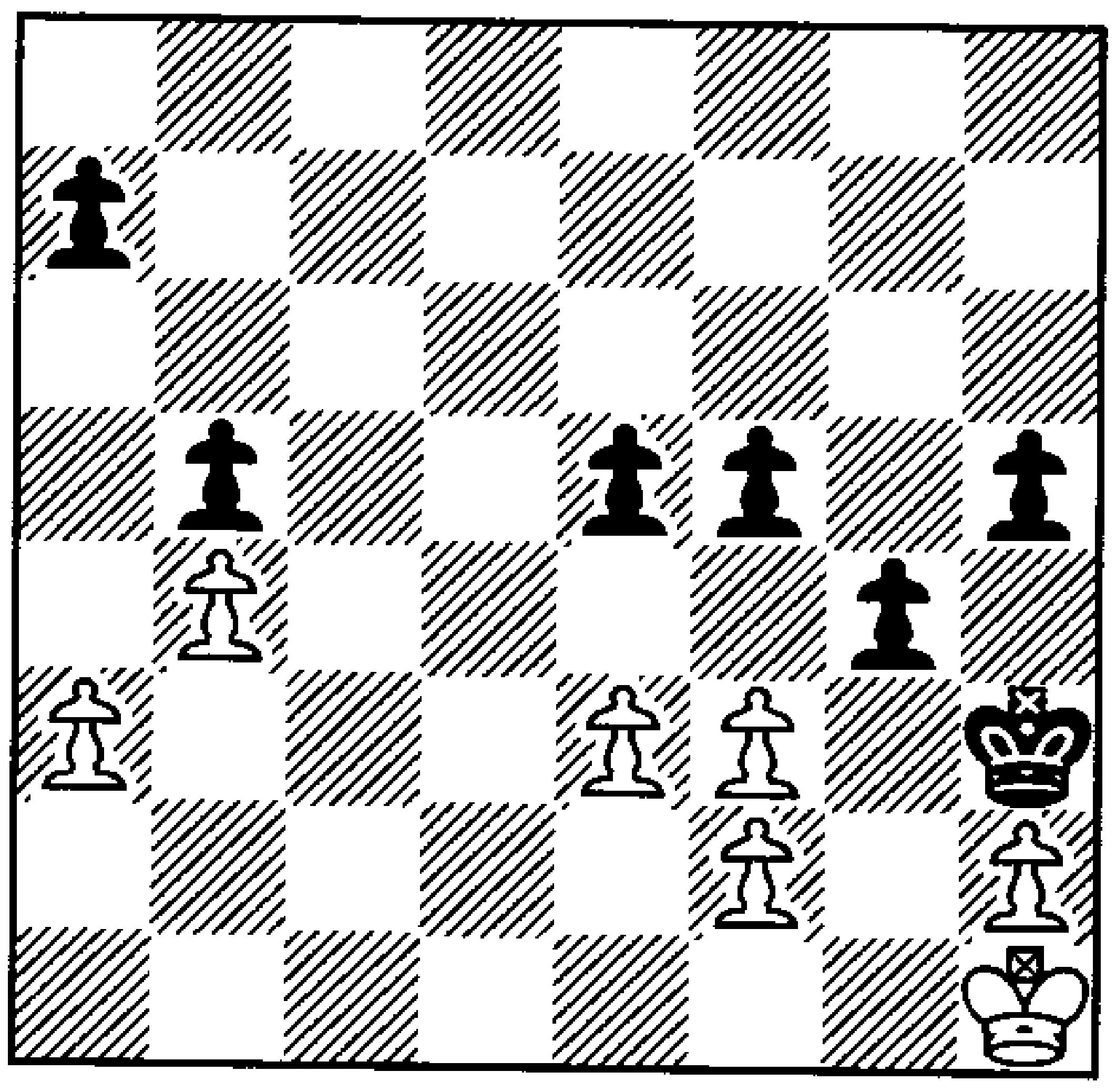
Also bad is 30 f4? exf4 31 exf4 ♔g4 or 30 e4 g5 31 ♔h1 h5 32 ♔g1 h4 33 ♔h1 g4 34 fxg4 ♔xg4 35 ♔g2 h3+ 36 ♔f1 ♔f3. But, in the opinion of Averbakh and Maizelis, 30 a4! b6 31 b5 was more tenacious, when Black would have won by 31...f5! 32 ♔h1 g5 33 ♔g1 h5 34 ♔h1 h4 35 ♔g1 e4 36 fxe4 fxe4 37 ♔h1 (or 37 f3 exf3 38 e4 g4 39 e5 g3) 37...♔g4 38 ♔g2 h3+ 39 ♔g1 ♔f3 40 ♔f1 g4.

30...b5!

'Now Black also has an extra tempo (...a7-a6), which may prove useful.' (Averbakh, Maizelis)

31 ♔g1 f5 32 ♔h1 g5 33 ♔g1 h5 34 ♔h1 g4

Wouldn't you agree that this resembles a study?



35 e4

If 35 fxg4, according to Averbakh, the simplest is 35...fxg4! 36 ♔g1 e4, then 37...h4 and 38...g3! In the variation 35...hxg4 36 ♔g1 f4 37 exf4 exf4 38 ♔h1 Maizelis's recommendation of 38...g3? (with the idea 39 hxg3 fxg3 40 f3? g2+ 41 ♔g1 ♔g3 42 f4 ♔xf4 43 ♔xg2 ♔e3 winning) leads to a draw after 39 fxg3! fxg3 40 hxg3 ♔xg3 41 ♔g1! ♔f3 42 ♔f1 ♔e3 43 ♔e1 ♔d3 44 ♔d1 ♔c3 45 a4!

However, even in this case grandmaster Speelman discovered a win: 38...f3! (instead of 38...g3?) 39 ♔g1 ♔h4, for example: 40 ♔h1 ♔g5 41 h3 gxh3 42 ♔h2 ♔g4 43 ♔g1 ♔f4 44 ♔h2 ♔e4 45 ♔xh3 (45 ♔g3 h2!) 45...♔d3 46 ♔g4 ♔e2 47 ♔g3 a6!, or 40 ♔f1 ♔h5! 41 ♔e1 ♔g5 42 ♔f1 (42 ♔d2 ♔h4) 42...♔f4 43 ♔e1 ♔e4 44 ♔d2 ♔d4 45 ♔c2 ♔c4 46 ♔d2 ♔b3 47 ♔e3 ♔xa3 48 ♔f4 ♔xb4 49 ♔xg4 a5.

35...fxe4! 36 fxe4

Or 36 fxg4 hxg4 37 ♔g1 e3 38 fxe3 e4 39 ♔h1 g3.

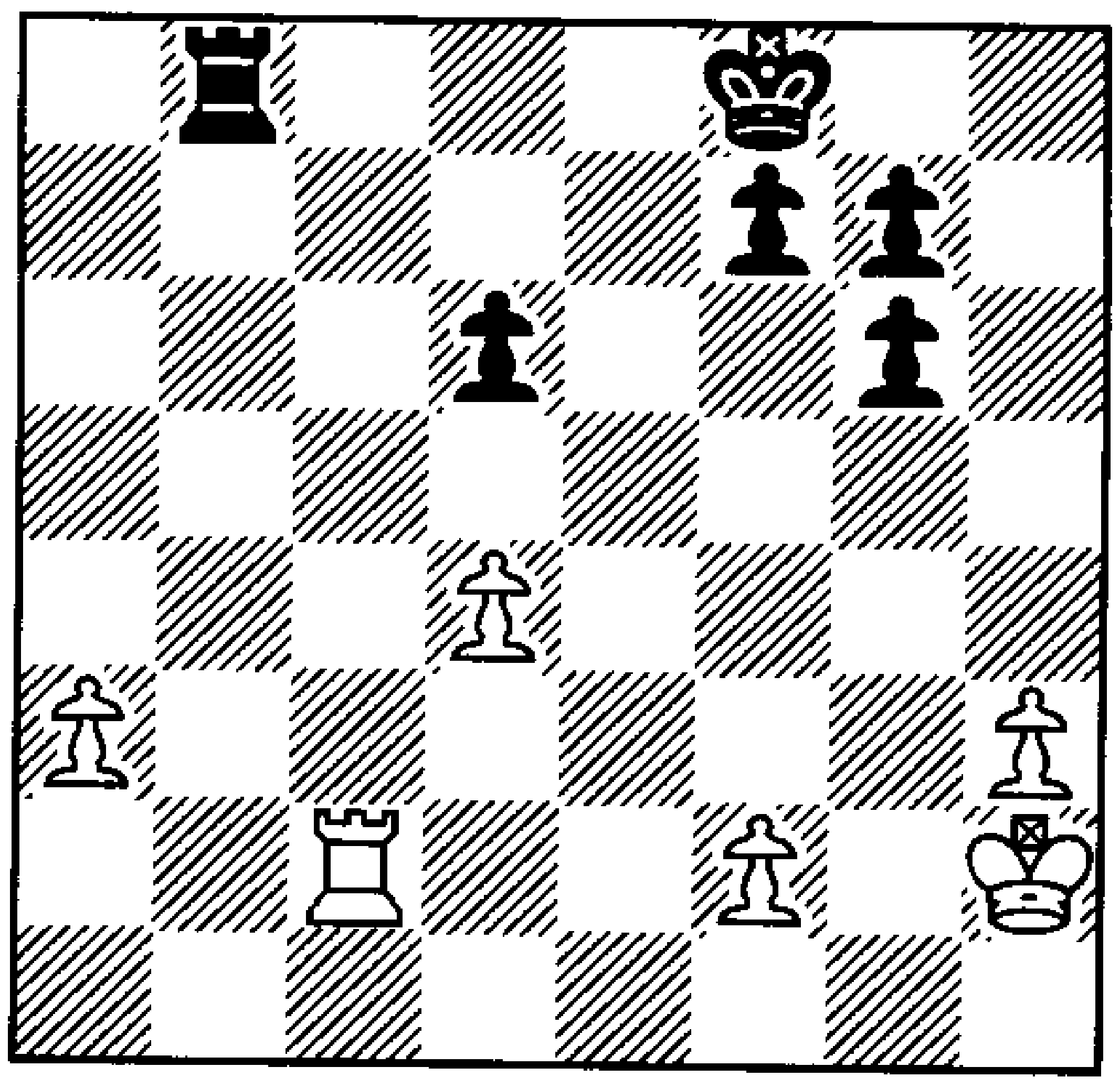
36...h4 37 ♔g1 g3! 38 hxg3 hxg3 0-1

39 fxg3 ♔xg3 etc. The same procedure was employed in the pawn ending that arose in the game Sveshnikov-Kasparov (47th USSR Championship, Minsk 1979), only Akiba's king ran along the third rank from h3, and mine from a3.

In the 13th round Rubinstein also completely crushed Schlechter, the then contender to the throne; according to Lasker, 'he played this game with exceptional power, and at times very subtly.'

And about the following complicated rook endgame, which was published in chess magazines around the world, the champion said: 'The skill with which Rubinstein conducted this ending cannot be praised too highly.'

Game 63
R.Spielmann-A.Rubinstein
St Petersburg 1909, 17th round



For a draw it is sufficient for White to give up his weak a3- and d4-pawns for the d6-pawn. But, amazingly, he is not able to do this!

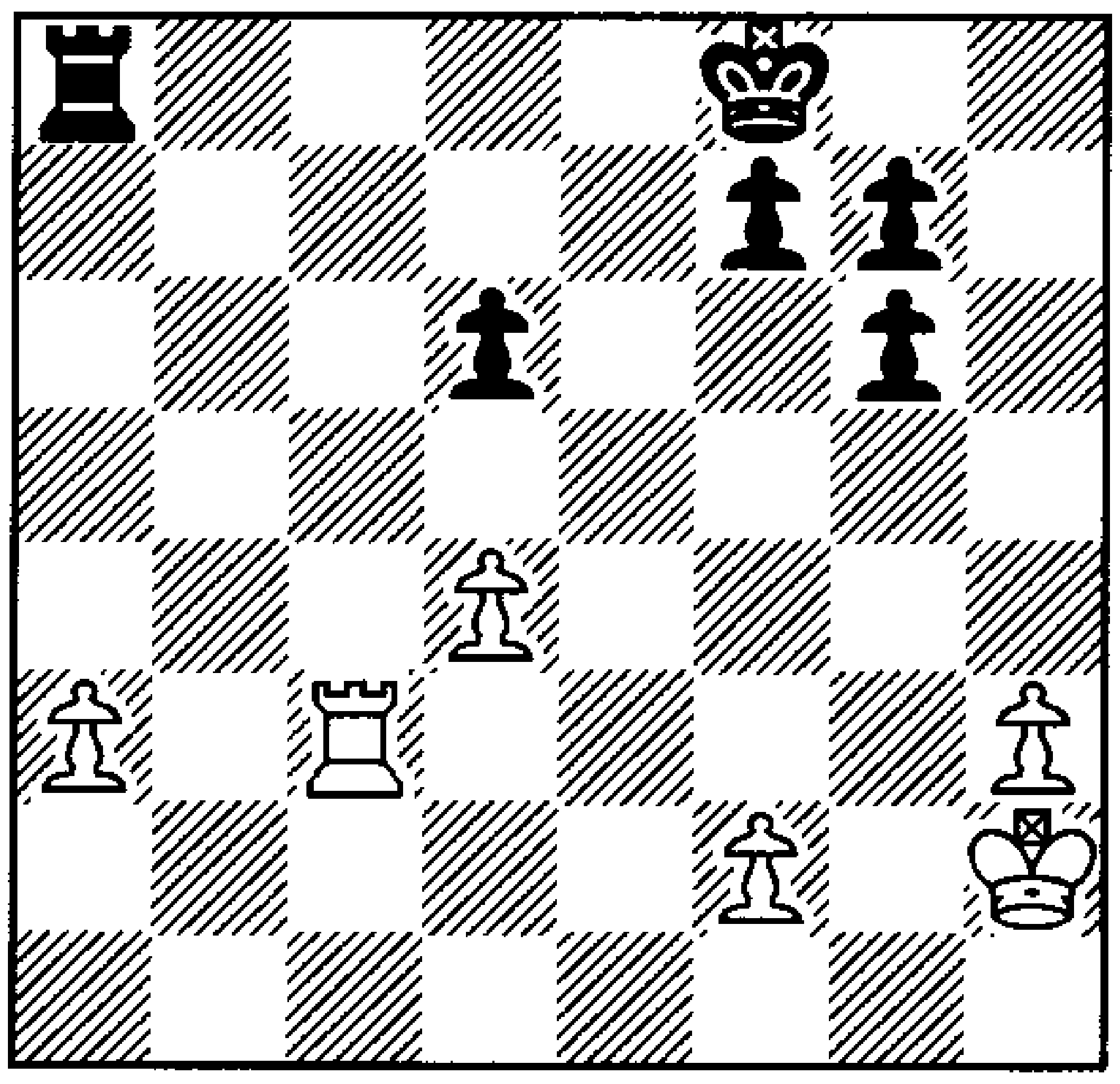
40...♖a8!

'By 40...♖b3 41 ♖a2 ♖d3 it is possible to win a pawn, but then after 42 a4! ♖xd4 43 a5 ♖c4 44 a6 ♖c8 45 a7 ♖a8 46 ♔g3 and ♔f3-e3-d4 there can be no question of Black winning. If he tries to capture the a7-pawn, he loses the pawn endgame.' (Levenfish, Smyslov)

41 ♖c3

A difficult choice. 'As a rule, one should try to place the rook behind a passed pawn,' writes Spielmann. 'However, this is advantageous if the pawn has already reached the middle of the board or crossed it: then the rook behind the passed pawn has freedom to manoeuvre. But here 41 ♖a2 would have completely paralysed White's game after 41...♖a4! 42 ♔g3 ♔e7! (but not 42...♖xd4? 43 a4 ♖c4 44 a5 ♖c7 45 a6 ♖a7 46 ♔f4 ♔e7 47 ♔e4 ♔e6 48 ♔d4 with a draw) 43 ♔f3 ♔e6 44 ♔e4 d5+ 45 ♔e3 ♔f5 and Black wins.'

But Levenfish and Smyslov pointed out 45 ♔d3! ♔d6 46 ♔c3 ♔c6 47 ♔d3 ♔b5 48 ♖b2+ with equality. It would appear that if 45...♔f5 they had in mind 46 ♔c3 with the idea of 47 ♔b3 ♖xd4 48 a4! ♖d3+ 49 ♔b4 ♖xh3 50 a5 etc. Here is their main variation, where 'Spielmann would apparently have gained a draw': 44...g5 (instead of 44...d5+) 45 ♖a1 f6 46 ♖a2 f5+ 47 ♔d3 ♔d5 48 ♔c3 ♖c4+ 49 ♔b3 ♖xd4 50 a4 ♖d3+ (or 50...♔c6 51 a5 ♔b7 52 a6+ ♔a7 53 ♖a5 ♖f4 54 ♖d5 ♖xf2 55 ♖xd6 ♖f3+ 56 ♔c4 ♖xh3 57 ♖g6 g4 58 ♔b5 ♖b3+ 59 ♔a5) 51 ♔b4 ♖xh3 52 a5 ♖h8 53 a6 ♔e4 54 a7 ♖a8 55 ♔b5 ♔f3 56 ♔b6.

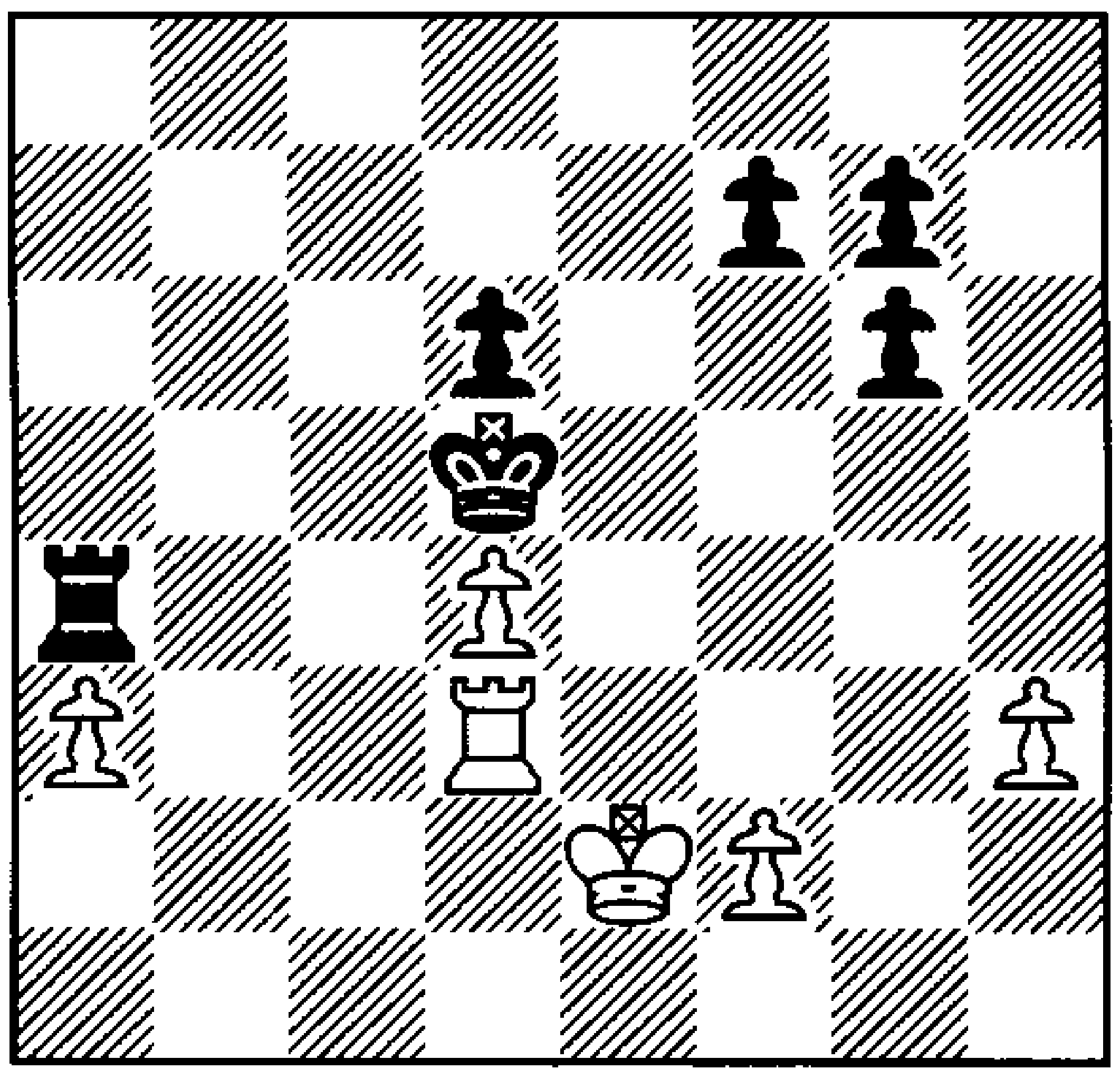


41...♖a4 42 ♖d3 ♔e7 43 ♔g3

'Of course, 43 d5 was necessary, to keep the black king further away: if 43...♔f6 there is 44 ♖f3+, and if 43...f5 – 44 ♖e3+ and ♖e6.' (Lasker) However, in my opinion here too after 43...g5! 44 ♔g3 ♔f6 45 ♖f3+ ♔g6 White faces difficult problems: ...♖d4 is threatened, and if 46 ♖d3, then 46...f6 and ...♔f5-e5 is possible.

43...♔e6 44 ♔f3 ♔d5 45 ♔e2

'It was worth considering 45 h4, which would have blocked the doubled g-pawns and restrained Black's activity on the other wing.' (Levenfish, Smyslov)



45...g5!

'Avoiding a cunning trap: if 45...♖xd4? 46 ♔e3!, and only White can win.' (Averbakh) 'The outside passed a-pawn does not allow Black to go in for the exchange of rooks.' (Spielmann)

46 ♖b3 f6

After 46...♔xd4 (46...♖xd4? 47 ♖d3!) Spielmann gives 47 ♖b7 and Averbakh adds 47...f6 (47...♖xa3 48 ♖xf7 ♖xh3 49 ♖xg7 is level) 48 ♖xg7 ♖xa3 49 h4! gxh4 50 ♖g4+ ♔c3 51 ♖xh4 'with good drawing chances', while Levenfish and Smyslov play 51...♖a2+ and write: 'In our view, in this position too White's defence involves great difficulties.'

47 ♔e3

Now after 47 ♖b7 ♖xa3 48 ♖xg7 ♖xh3 all the same the d-pawn cannot be defended.' (Spielmann)

47...♔c4! (once again: 47...♖xd4? 48 ♖d3)

48 ♖d3 d5 49 ♔d2 ♖a8

The rook switches from defence to attack. 'Black's plan becomes clear. White ends up in zugzwang.' (Levenfish, Smyslov)

50 ♔c2 (50 ♔e3?! ♖b8 51 ♔d2 ♖b2+ 52 ♔e3 ♖a2 wins)

50...♖a7! 51 ♔d2 ♖e7!

'As a result of all these manoeuvres White is forced to give up one of his pawns without any compensation.' (Spielmann)

52 ♖c3+

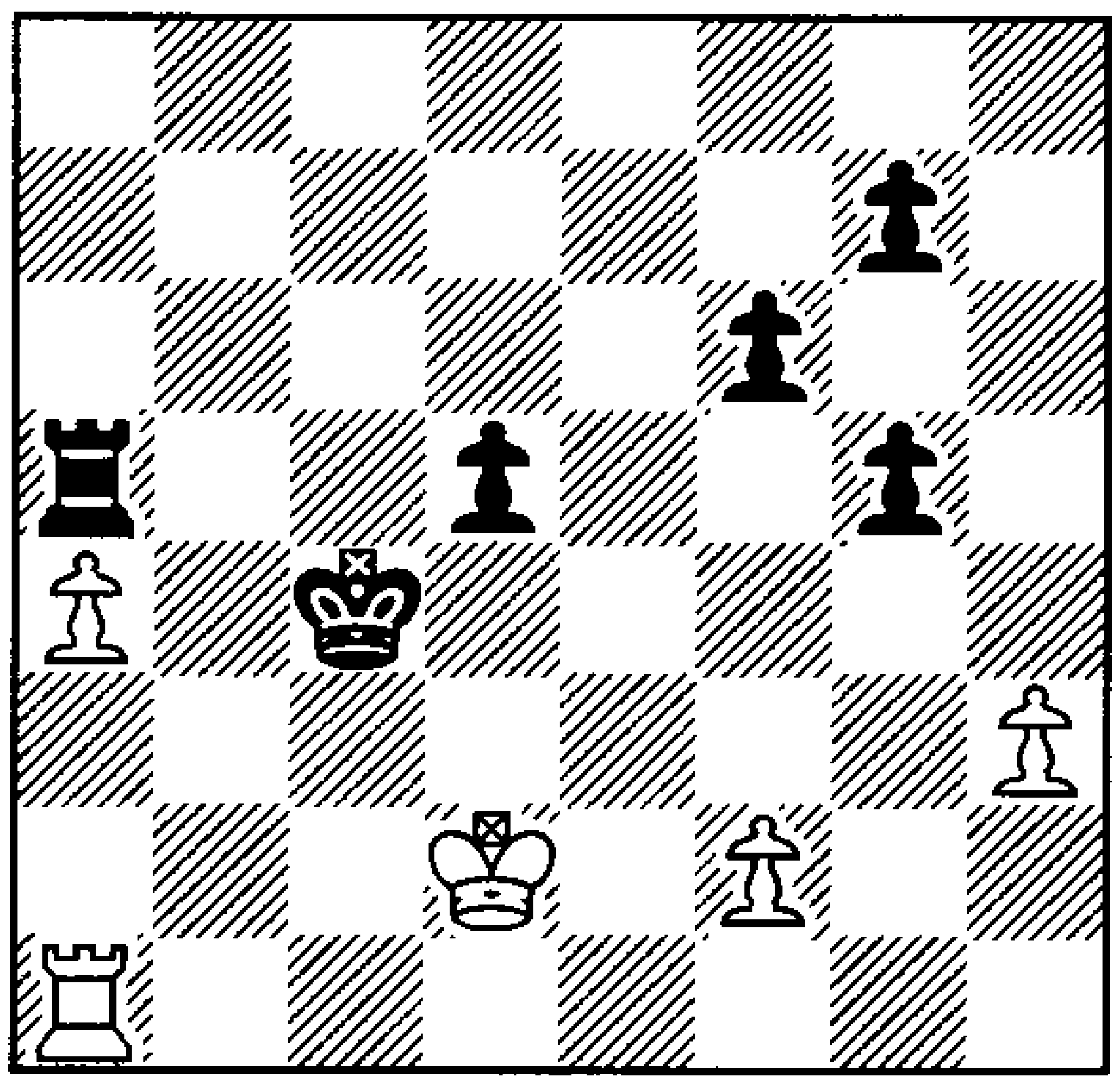
'White cannot avoid the loss of a pawn: if 52 ♖e3, then 52...♖b7! 53 ♖d3 ♖b2+.' (Lasker) Or 52 ♔c2 ♖e2+ 53 ♖d2 ♖xd2+ 54 ♔xd2 ♔b3! and wins (Spielmann).

52...♔xd4 53 a4! ♖a7 54 ♖a3 ♖a5

'It is still unfavourable for Black to go into the pawn ending. Therefore he blocks the pawn, to be free to strengthen his position.' (Levenfish, Smyslov)

55 ♖a1 ♔c4

'A typical plan: Black takes his king to a5, freeing his rook to attack the opponent's weak pawns.' (Averbakh)



56 ♔e3?!

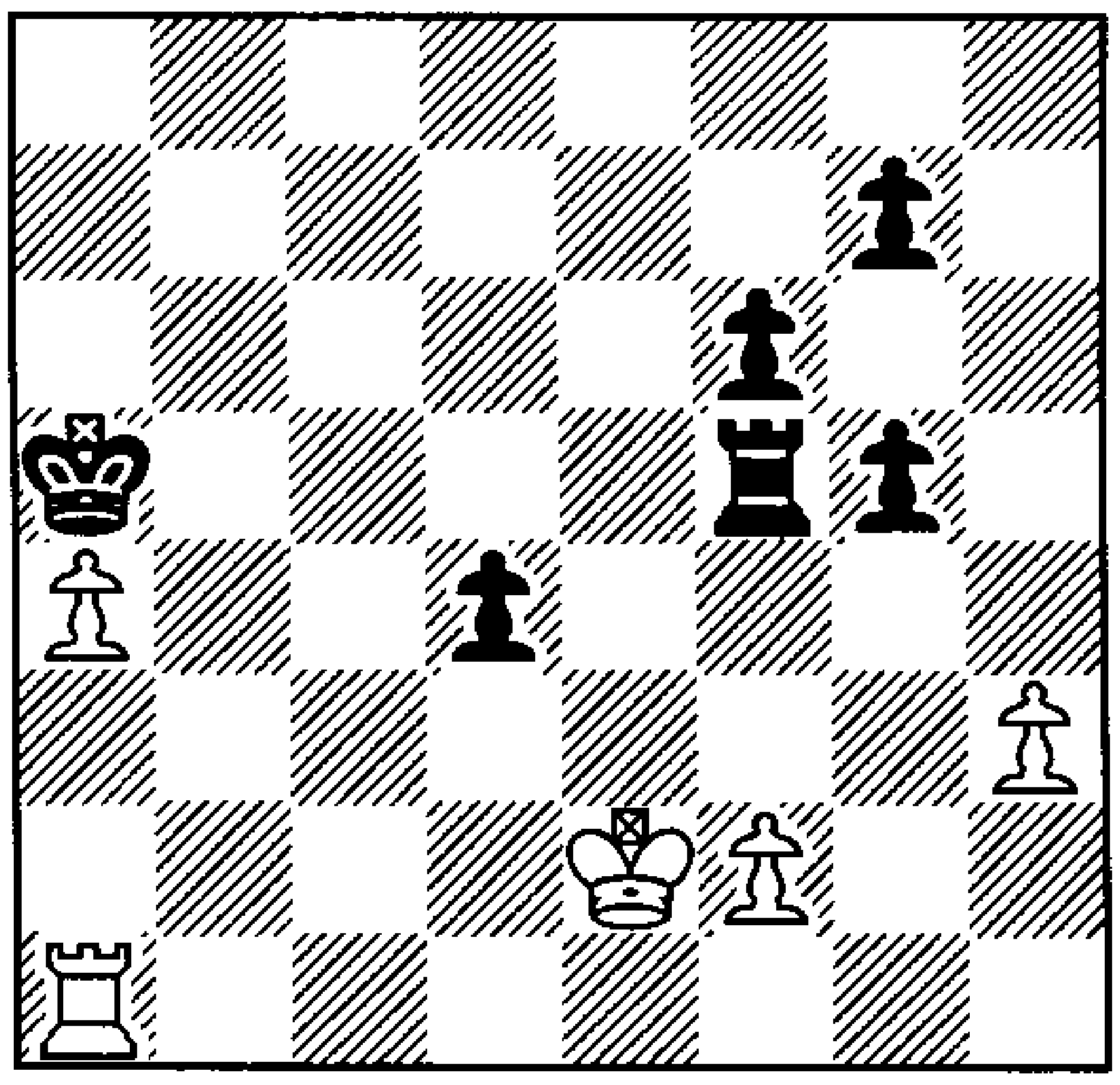
Spielmann makes no comment at this point, but analysts from the late-20th century point out the strongest defence – launching a counterattack by 56 ♖c1+ ♔b4 57 ♖b1+! ♔xa4 (57...♔a3 58 ♖b7 ♖xa4 59 ♖xg7 ♖f4 60 ♔e2 ♔b3 61 ♖c7! Averbakh) 58 ♔d3 ♖c5 (risky is 58...♖b5?! 59 ♖a1+ ♔b4 60 ♔d4) 59 ♔d4 ♖c2 60 ♖b7 ♖xf2 61 ♖xg7 'with drawing chances.' (Levenfish, Smyslov)

And indeed, although the position after 61...♖d2+ 62 ♔c5 ♔b3 63 ♖f7 ♔c3 64 ♖xf6 d4 looks dangerous for White, I have been unable to find a clear win for Black: 65 ♖a6! d3 66 ♖a3+ ♔b2 67 ♔b4 ♖d1 68 ♖c3 etc.

56...d4+! 57 ♔d2 ♖f5! 58 ♔e1

If 58 a5, then simply 58...♖xf2+ 59 ♔e1 ♖b2 (but not 59...♖h2? 60 ♖a4+ ♔b5 61 a6!) 60 a6 ♖b8 61 a7 ♖a8 62 ♔d2 ♔c5 63 ♔d3 ♔b6 64 ♔xd4 ♖xa7 wins.

58...♔b4 59 ♔e2 ♔a5!



'The king blocks the passed pawn, and the rook begins eliminating the white pawns. Black would have lost his advantage after 59...♖a5? 60 ♔d3 ♖xa4 61 ♖xa4+ ♔xa4 62 ♔xd4.' (Levenfish, Smyslov)

60 ♖a3 ♖f4 61 ♖a2 (no better was 61 ♔f1 ♖h4 62 ♔g2 ♔b4! 63 ♖a1 d3 64 a5 d2 65 a6 ♖h8 66 a7 ♖a8 67 ♔f3 ♖xa7 and wins) **61...♖h4 62 ♔d3**

Or 62 ♖a3 ♔b4!

62...♖xh3+ 63 ♔xd4 ♖h4+ 64 ♔d3 ♖xa4 65 ♖e2 ♖f4

Here White could have resigned, but Spielmann most probably remembers that it is never too late to resign...

66 ♔e3 ♔b6 67 ♖c2 ♔b7 68 ♖c1 ♖a4 69 ♖h1 ♔c6 70 ♖h7 ♖a7 71 ♔e4 ♔d6 72 ♔f5 (hastening the end) **72...g6+! 73 ♔xg6 ♖xh7 74 ♔xh7 ♔e5 75 ♔g6 g4 0-1**

This is an eternally living, classic rook endgame! As also are his finish with Lasker (*Game No.61*), Rubinstein's miraculous saving of his game with Tarrasch (San Sebastian 1911), and his incisive wins over Alekhine (Carlsbad 1911) and Schlechter (San Sebastian 1912).

Talking about Rubinstein's merits in the field of the endgame, I should mention that by a process of experimentation the leading masters of that era discovered the positions that became theoretical and ended up in all the endgame books. In the collection of the 'great Akiba' there are masses of such endings, each one more subtle and prettier than the last! For example, bishop against knight – the instructive conversion of a positional advantage in his game with Réti (Gothenburg 1920).

Or rook and pawn against bishop and pawn. First Rubinstein, with the rook, defeated Salwe in Prague 1909 (White – ♔g3, ♗g5, ♙h4; Black – ♔e4, ♖f8, ♙h5), where half a century later Baranov discovered in the course of things a study-like draw, and a further nine years later Maizelis pointed out what was after all the correct way to win... Then Rubinstein, on ending up in a difficult position in his game with Tartakower (Vienna 1922), found a quite amazing draw, this time with the bishop (White – ♔f3, ♗c1, ♙g4; Black – ♔d3, ♖g8, ♙g5; the bypass by the king from below does not work because of ♗xg5!).

As a result of a fascinating tournament race in St Petersburg 1909, it was only thanks to scoring 9½ out of 10(!) in the middle of the tournament and winning at the end against Teichmann that Lasker was able to catch his unexpected rival and share first place with him. He and Rubinstein finished 3½ points ahead of their nearest pursuers! It became clear that there had appeared in Russia a worthy successor to Chigorin's glory – a very real challenger for the title of world champion. One noteworthy detail: in the secondary All-Russian tournament for amateurs the winner was the future chess king, the 16-year-old Alexander Alekhine...

A turning point in Rubinstein's fate was the major international tournament in San Sebastian (1911), where the 22-year-old Capablanca made his debut. The talented Cuban quickly took the lead, whereas Akiba started slowly. 'He lost at least two and a half points,' writes Mieses in the tournament book, 'since in his games with Teichmann, Vidmar, Bernstein, Marshall and Spielmann he missed a clear win due to careless play (which earlier had never happened with him!).'

However, two rounds before the finish Rubinstein nevertheless caught up with the leader, by defeating him brilliantly in their individual meeting.

Game 64

A.Rubinstein-J.R.Capablanca

San Sebastian 1911, 13th round

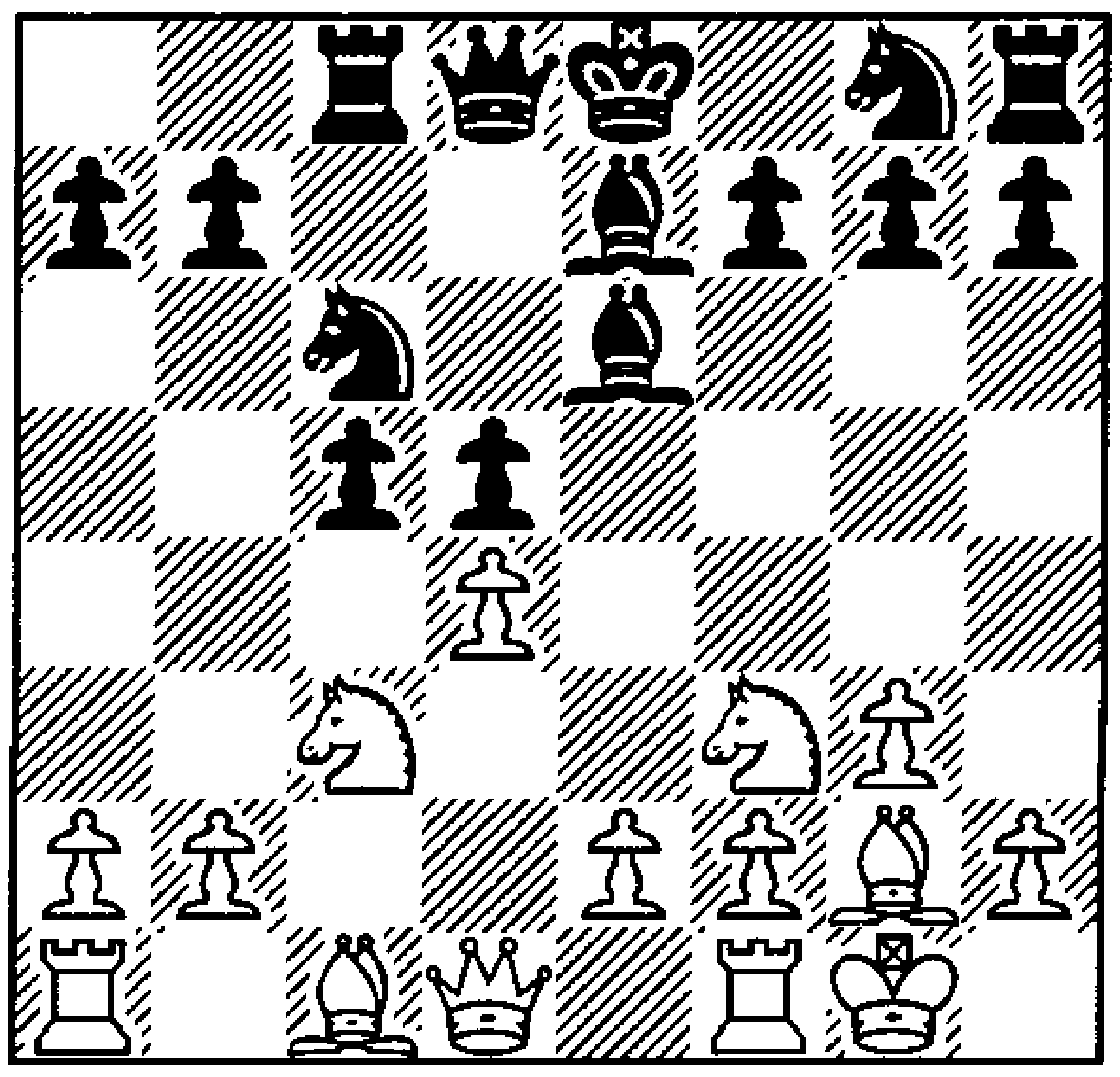
Queen's Gambit D33

1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 c5 3 c4 e6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♘c3 ♘c6 6 g3 ♗e6?!

'In making the text move I was trying to avoid the beaten track. 6...♘f6 is the normal move in this variation. White's development was first introduced by Schlechter and elaborated later on by Rubinstein. It aims at the isolation of Black's d-pawn, against which the white pieces are gradually concentrated.' (Capablanca)

7 ♗g2 ♗e7 8 0-0 ♖c8?!

As before 8...♘f6 was better (*Game No.75*).



9 dxc5 ♗xc5 10 ♘g5!?

'I had not yet learned of the attack founded on ♘g5 and the exchange of the bishop at e6.' (Capablanca) Another attempt to exploit Black's delay in developing his g8-knight is 10 ♘a4!? ♗e7 11 ♗e3.

10...♘f6 11 ♘xe6 fxe6 12 ♗h3!

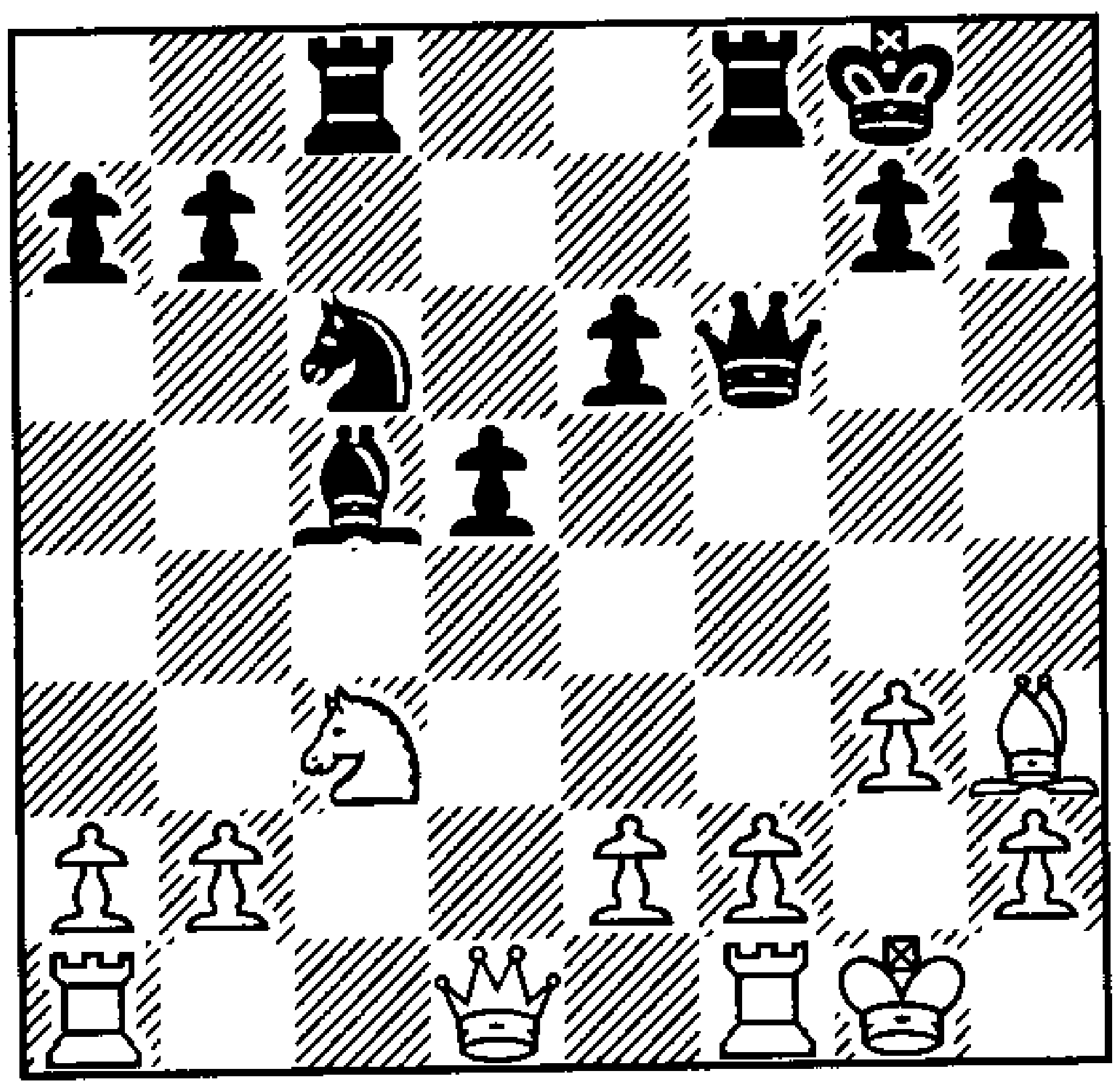
'The start of a complicated combination. This is not the only way to develop White's initiative. The natural 12 e4 also came into consideration, for example: 12...dxe4 13 ♕b3!? (13 ♘xe4 ♕xd1 14 ♖xd1 ♘xe4 15 ♗xe4 0-0 16 ♗e3) 13...♕e7 14 ♘xe4, or 12...d4 (*! – G. K.*) 13 ♘a4 ♗e7 (13...♕e7?! 14 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 15 ♕b3) 14 ♕b3 and it is hard for Black to defend (Razuvaev). But in my view, after 14...♕d7! 15 ♗d2 0-0 the situation is completely unclear.

12...♕e7 13 ♗g5 0-0?!

'Too late! Now a storm breaks out.' (Kmoch) 'This is a mistake. The right move was 13...♖d8 in order to get the rook away from the line of the bishop at h3 and at the same time to support the d-pawn. Against the text move White makes a very fine combination, which I had seen but which I thought could be defeated.' (Capablanca)

14 ♗xf6 ♕xf6?

'I considered 14...gxf6, which it seemed would give me a playable game, but I thought White's combination unsound and therefore let him play it, to my lasting regret.' (Capablanca) The capture with the pawn was indeed the lesser evil: although after 15 ♘xd5! exd5 16 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 17 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 18 e3 ♖d8 19 ♕f5 White has an obvious advantage, it is not so easy to convert it.



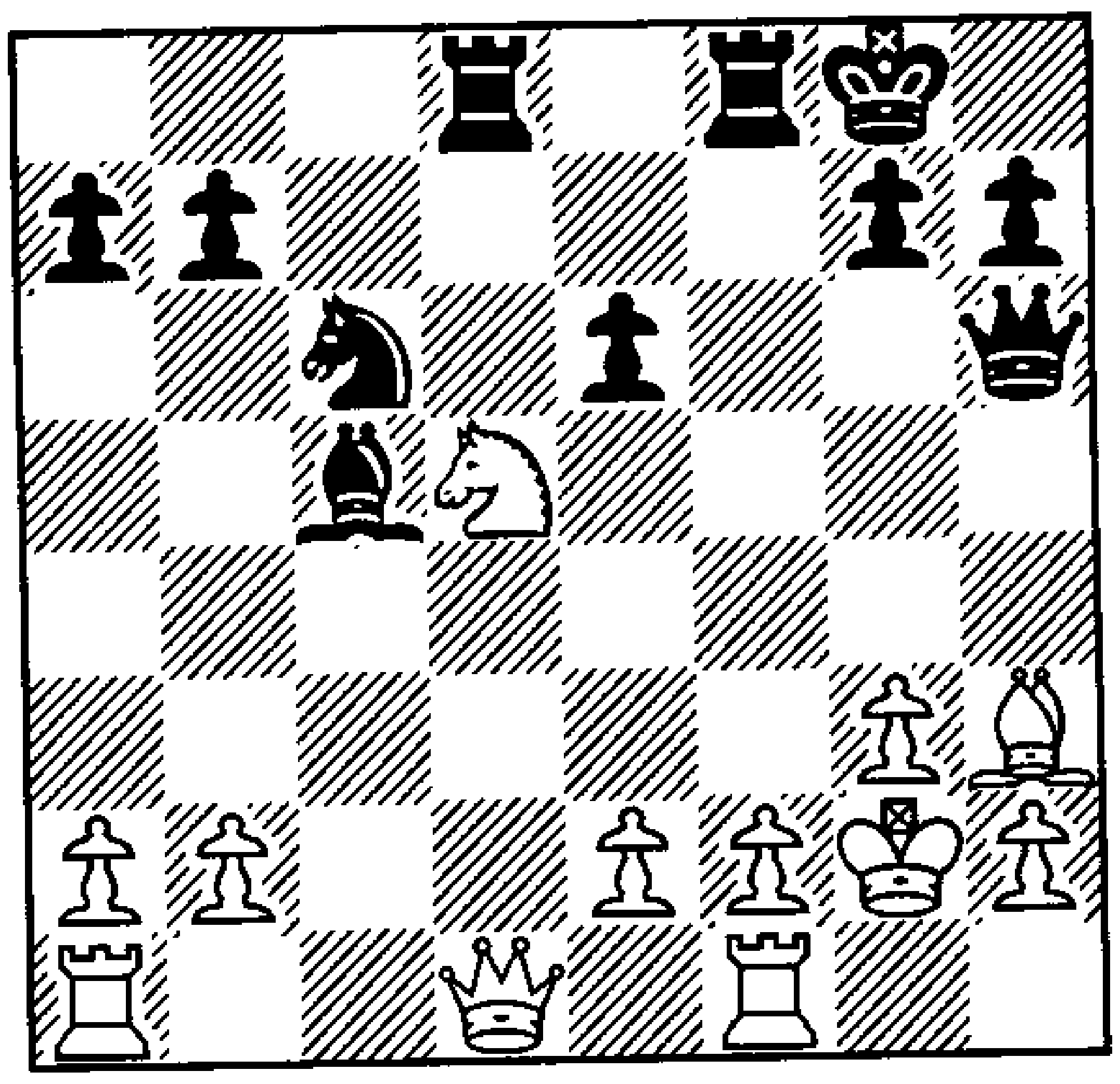
15 ♘xd5! ♕h6

But not 15...exd5? 16 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 17 ♗xc8 or 15...♗xf2+? 16 ♔g2 ♕f7 17 ♘f4.

16 ♔g2!

Capa had only reckoned on 16 ♗g2? ♘e5! with an excellent game for Black: 17 ♘f4 (17 ♖c1? ♕xc1! 18 ♕xc1 ♗xf2+) 17...♘g4 18 h3 (18 ♘h3 ♗xf2+) 18...♘xf2 19 ♖xf2 ♗xf2+ 20 ♔xf2 g5 winning.

16...♖cd8 (in Capa's words, 'submitting to the inevitable')



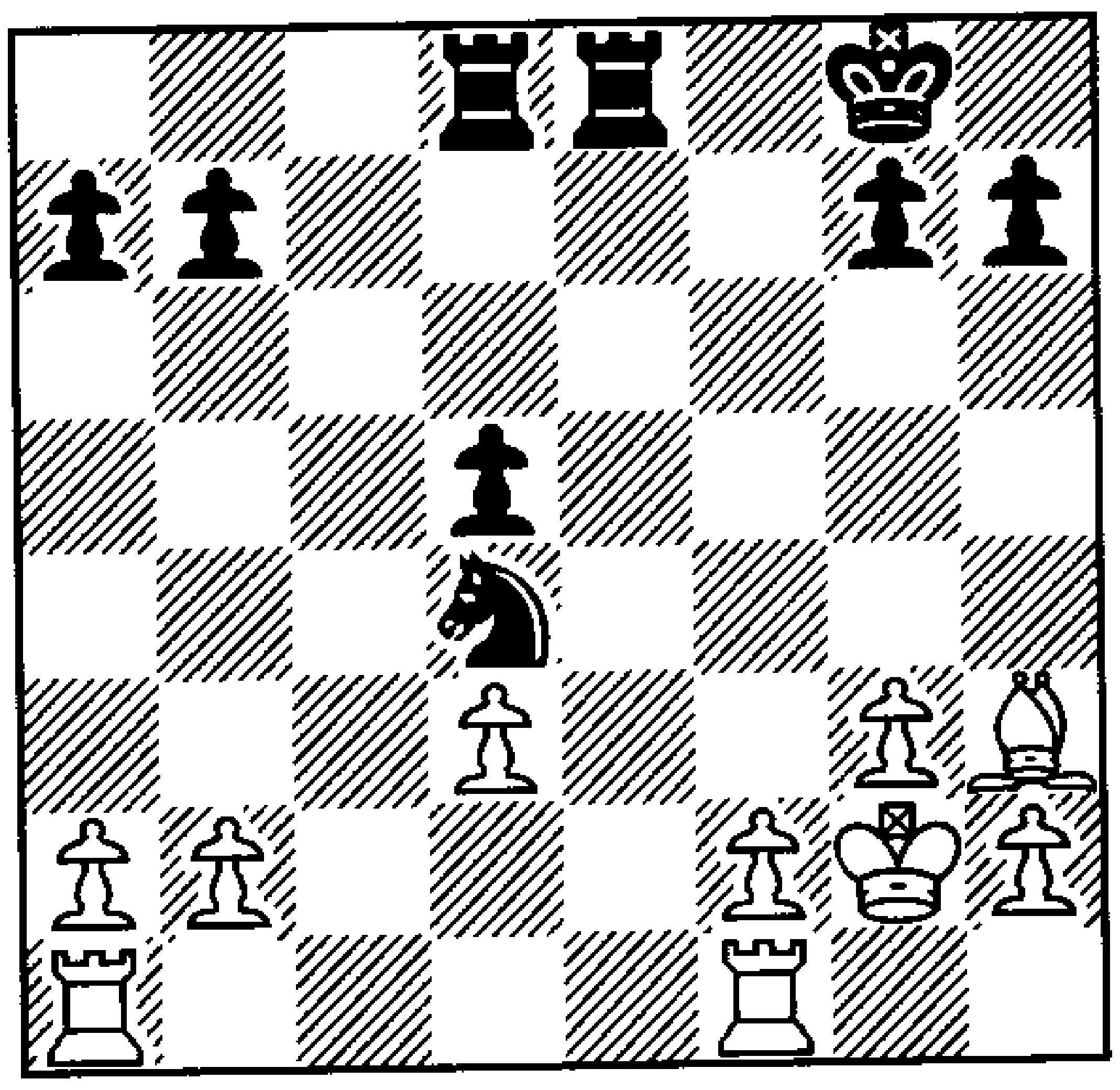
17 ♕c1!!

A brilliant stroke, envisaged beforehand, which replicates in amazing fashion the game with Lasker (*Game No.61*). Rubinstein defeated the two champions using practically one and the same device!

17...exd5

There is nothing else: 17...♖xd5? 18 ♕xh6 gxh6 19 ♗xe6+ and ♗xd5; 17...♕xc1? 18 ♗xe6+ ♔h8 19 ♖axc1 etc.

18 ♕xc5 ♕d2 19 ♕b5 ♘d4 20 ♕d3 ♕xd3 21 exd3 ♖fe8



'In the resulting ending White has an extra pawn and a good bishop, and hence winning chances. Black's only trump is his slight lead in development.' (Razuvaev)

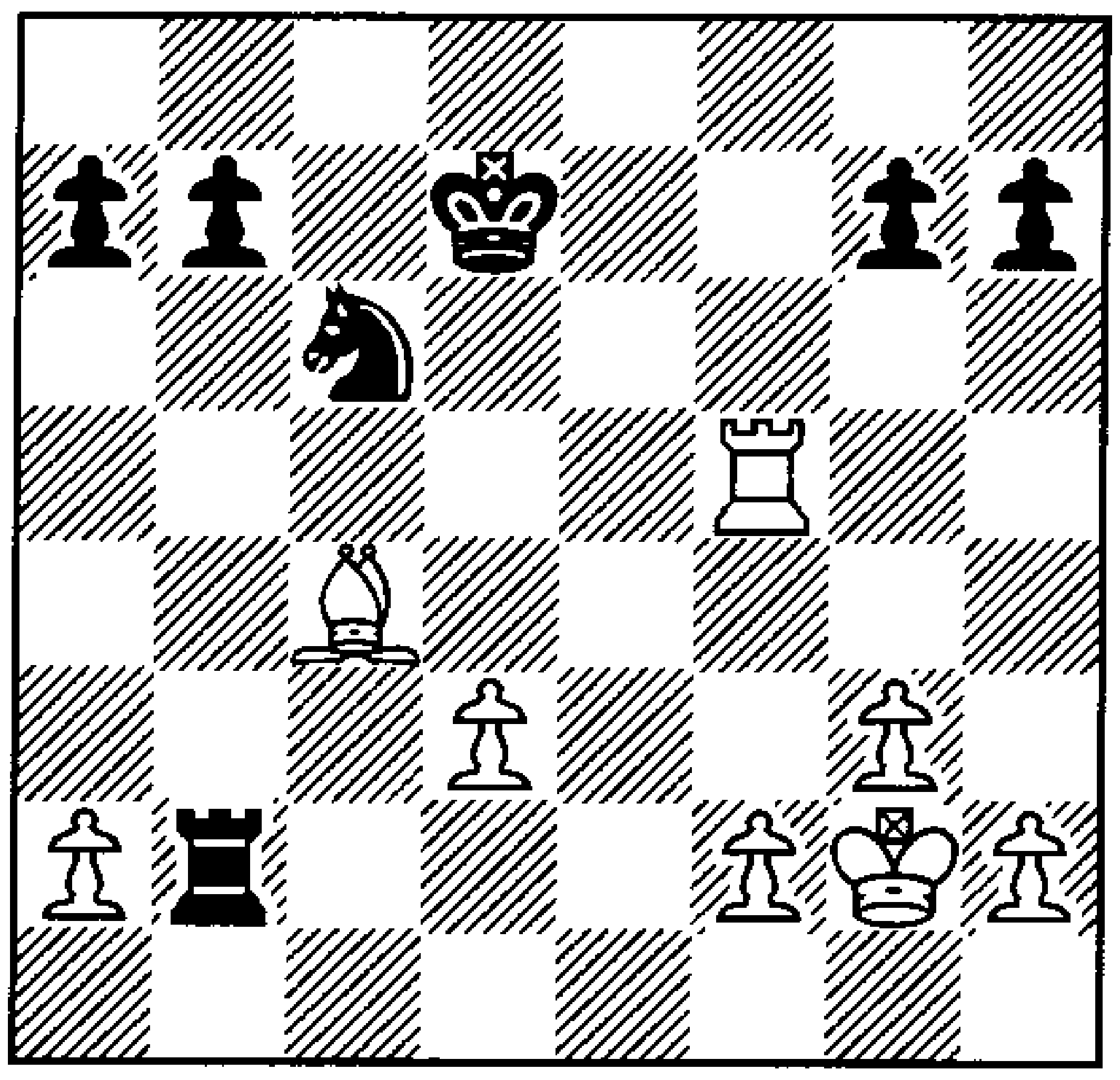
22 ♗g4!?

In the event of 22 ♖fe1 ♘c2 23 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 Black has definite counterplay.' (Tarrasch) But nevertheless it is insufficient after 24 ♖d1. Capablanca gave 24 ♖c1!? ♖e2 25 ♔f1 ♘d4 (25...♖d2 26 ♗e6+ ♔f8 27 ♗xd5) 26 ♖c8+ ♔f7 27 ♖c7+ ♖e7 28 ♖c5 and 'wins', and criticised the bishop move: 'This gives Black a chance.'

22...♖d6! 23 ♖fe1 ♖xe1 24 ♖xe1 ♖b6! 25 ♖e5

To overcome Capablanca's stubborn resistance, very fine endgame technique is required. Also possible was 25 b3!? ♖a6 26 ♖e5! ♖xa2 27 ♖xd5 ♘c6 (27...♘xb3? 28 ♗e6+ ♔f8 29 ♖f5+ and ♗xb3) 28 ♗e6+ ♔f8 29 ♖d7 ♘e5 30 ♖xb7, 'and White should win quickly.' (Razuvaev)

25...♖xb2 26 ♖xd5 ♘c6 27 ♗e6+ ♔f8 28 ♖f5+ (but not 28 ♖d7?! ♘e5) **28...♔e8 29 ♗f7+ ♔d7 30 ♗c4**



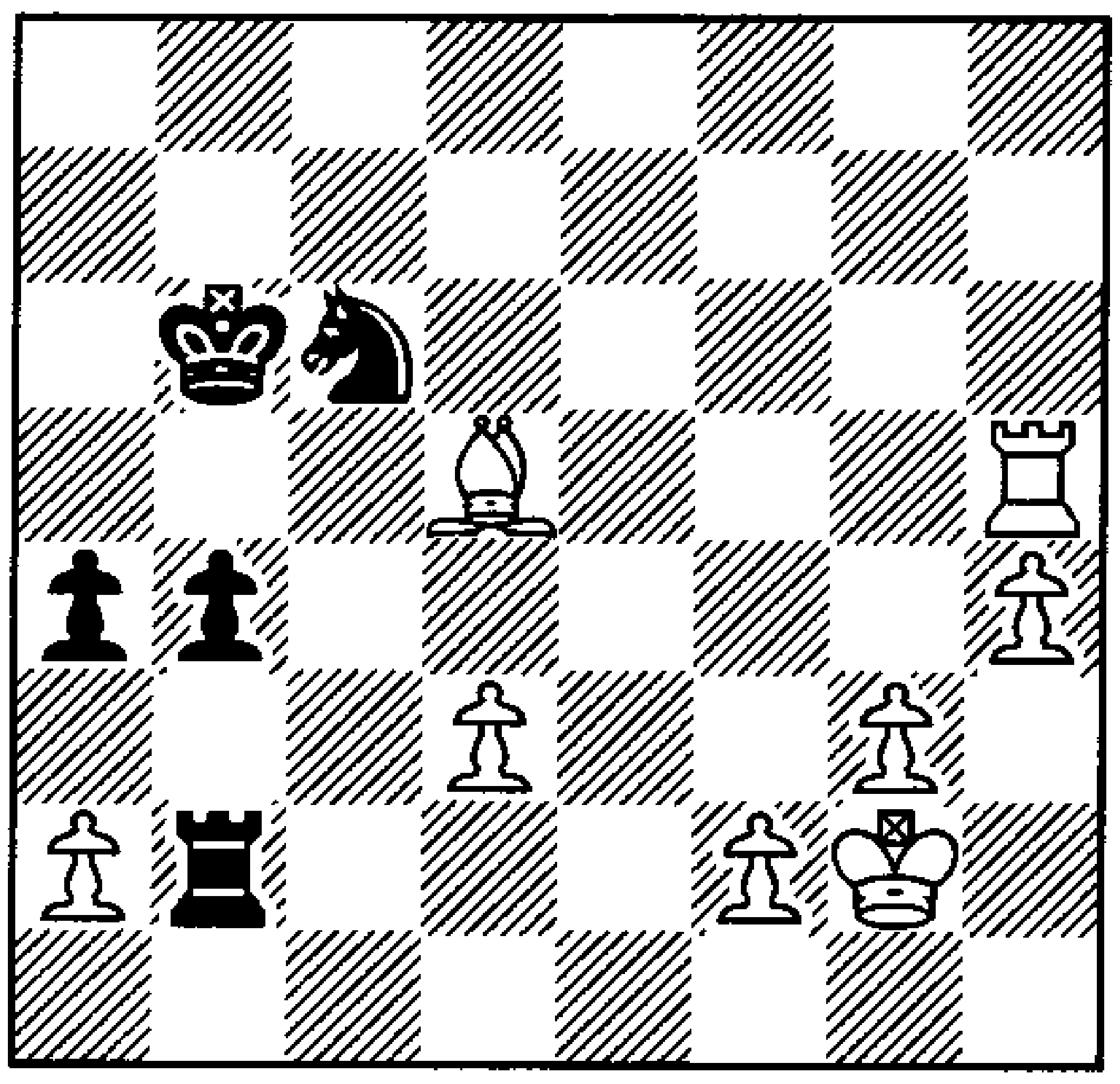
30...a6?!

'Black's only chance is his extra pawn on the queenside,' writes Razuvaev, and he attaches an exclamation mark to this move. But Capablanca thought otherwise: 'A bad move, which gives away any legitimate chance Black had to draw. It loses a very important move. The proper way was to play 30...♔d6. If then 31 ♖b5 (? – *G. K.*) 31...♖xb5 32 ♗xb5 ♘d4 followed by ...b7-b5 and White would have an exceedingly difficult game to draw on account of the dominating position of the knight at d4 in conjunction with the extra pawn on the queenside and the awkward position of White's king.'

I agree that 30...♔d6! would have given Black better chances, for example: 31 ♖d5+ ♔e7 32 ♖b5?! (a basically incorrect idea) 32...♖xb5 33 ♗xb5 ♘d4 34 ♗a4 b5 35 ♗d1 a5! (but not 35...♔d6 36 f4 ♔c5 37 ♔f2 ♔b4 38 ♔e3 ♔c3 39 g4 a5 40 f5 h6 41 h4 winning) 36 f4 ♘c6 37 ♔f1 ♘b4 38 a3 ♘c6 39 ♔f2 ♔d6 40 ♔e3 ♔c5 with sufficient compensation for the pawn.

However, after 31 ♖f7! impassive computer analysis nevertheless promises White a win: 31...b5 32 ♗b3 ♘d4 33 ♖xa7 ♘xb3 34 axb3 ♖xb3 35 ♖xg7 ♖xd3 36 ♖xh7 ♔c6 37 ♖h8 ♔c7 38 ♖h4 ♔d6 39 ♖b4 ♔c5 40 ♖b1 b4 41 h4, or 31...♘e5 32 ♖xg7 b5 33 ♗b3 a5 (33...♘xd3 34 ♖xa7 ♖xf2+ 35 ♔g1 ♖b2 36 ♖xh7 ♘c1 37 ♖h5 ♘xb3 38 ♖xb5 ♖b1+ 39 ♔g2 ♘d2 40 ♖xb1 ♘xb1 41 a4 ♘c3 42 a5 also wins) 34 d4 ♘d3 35 ♔f3 ♘c1 36 ♗g8 ♘xa2 37 ♖xh7 ♘c3 38 ♖h6+ ♔e7 39 ♖a6 a4 40 h4 ♘d1 41 d5 ♖xf2+ 42 ♔e4.

31 ♖f7+ ♔d6 32 ♖xg7 b5 33 ♗g8 a5 34 ♖xh7 a4 35 h4 b4 36 ♖h6+ ♔c5 37 ♖h5+ ♔b6 38 ♗d5?



'With these three last moves White again gives Black a chance. The text move is a downright blunder.’ (Capablanca) I think that this was the result of nervous fatigue: generally speaking, Rubinstein, like Fischer half a century later, had an obvious soft spot for his light-squared bishop and he more than once performed miracles with it... There was a comparatively easy win by 38 ♗c4!, and if 38...b3, then 39 axb3 a3 40 ♖b5+ ♔c7 41 b4.

38...b3?

Missing an unexpected saving chance – 38...♖xa2!! ‘White’s best continuation then would have been 39 ♗c4 (39 ♗xa2? b3) 39...♖c2 40 ♖b5+ ♔c7 41 ♗g8 a3 42 h5 a2 43 ♗xa2 ♖xa2 44 h6 ♖a6! (but not 44...♖a8? 45 g4!) with excellent chances for a draw.’ (Capablanca) The computer confirms this evaluation: 45 g4 ♘e7 46 g5 (46 h7 ♖a8) 46...♖b6 47 ♖xb6 ♔xb6 48 f4 b3 49 h7 ♘g6 50 f5 b2 51 fxg6 b1♕ 52 h8♕ ♕c2+ 53 ♔f3 ♕xd3+ 54 ♔f4 ♕d2+ 55 ♔f5 ♕c2+ with a draw.

39 ♖h6!? ♖c2 40 h5 seems tempting. Here Razuvaev gives two supposedly winning variations for White: 40...b3 41 ♖e6 b2 (*? – G. K.*) 42 ♗a2 ♖c1 43 h6 ♖a1 44 h7 ♖xa2 45 h8♕ b1♕ 46 ♕b8+, and 40...a3 41 ♖e6 a2 (*? – G. K.*) 42 ♖e1 ♘d4 43 h6 b3 44 h7 ♖c8 45 ♗g8.

However, after 40...b3 41 ♖e6 stronger is 41...♖c5! 42 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 43 ♖xc6+ ♔xc6 44 h6 b2 45 h7 b1♕ 46 h8♕ ♕xd3 with a probable draw (47 ♕e8+ ♕d7). And, even worse, in the event of 40...a3! 41 ♖e6 ♖c5! the advantage is altogether on the side of Black!

39 axb3 (39 ♗xb3!? would also have won) **39...a3** (39...axb3 40 ♖h6 wins) **40 ♗xc6! ♖xb3**

Or 40...a2 41 ♖b5+ ♔a6 42 ♖b8! a1♕ 43 ♖a8+ and ♖xa1.

41 ♗d5 a2 42 ♖h6+! 1-0

42...♔a7 43 ♖h8 or 42...♔a5 43 ♗c4! and the rook reaches the a-file in time.

But even so, first place went to Capablanca: in his last game Rubinstein failed to find a one-move win(!) against Schlechter. ‘He, of whom one of the acknowledged virtues is precisely his ability to win won positions, to general astonishment, in this game, such an important one for him, missed a certain chance.’ (Mieses) Thus on the chess scene there appeared a new, more fortunate contender for the chess crown...

It is time to say something about the gigantic, staggeringly high-quality contribution of Rubinstein to modern opening theory. He discovered new paths in the most diverse variations of the Queen’s Gambit: apart from the ‘Rubinstein Attack’ given above and his systems in the Tarrasch Defence, there is his variation in the Queen’s Gambit Accepted – 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 e3 e5 5 ♗xc4 c5 6 0-0 a6 7 a4, which, incidentally, was also tested in the Botvinnik-Petrosian world championship match (Moscow 1963). And, now for Black, there is his highly popular Meran Variation in the Slav, opened to the world in his games with Teichmann (Carlsbad 1923) and Grünfeld (Meran 1924).

His interpretation of the English Opening in his game with Duras (Carlsbad 1911) became classical: 1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 g3 ♗b4 4 ♗g2 0-0 5 ♘f3 ♖e8 6 0-0 ♘c6 7 ♘d5! etc. Incidentally, it was in this encounter that he overpowered his opponent with the staggering positional move 27 ♕f1!! His games are studded with similar gems – take the murderous manoeuvre 21 ♘d1!! in his game with Tarrasch (Hastings 1922).

When the Nimzo-Indian Defence appeared – 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4, Rubinstein immediately devised the variation 4 e3 and 5 ♘e2 against it (to avoid the spoiling of the pawn formation!), which even today is considered one of the most interesting and venomous, partly thanks to the match games Korchnoi-Karpov (Baguio 1978). At the same time he developed the fundamental Anti-Queen’s Indian variation 3 ♘f3 b6 4 g3, which for a long time became White’s main weapon in this opening.

In all the openings which he played against 1 e4, original systems and variations bearing his name have been retained! In the Sicilian

Defence – 1...c5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 e5 ♘d5; in the French – 1...e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 dxe4 or 3...♘f6 4 ♗g5 dxe4, for example: 5 ♘xe4 ♘bd7 6 ♘f3 ♗e7 7 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 8 ♗d3 b6 9 ♘e5 ♗b7 10 ♗b5+ c6 11 ♗xc6+?! ♗xc6 12 ♘xc6 ♕d5!, and after 13 ♘e5 ♕xg2 14 ♕f3 ♕xf3 15 ♘xf3 ♖c8 Black finally won the endgame (Schlechter-Rubinstein, San Sebastian 1912). And whereas Akiba's Sicilian idea has not found any followers, his exchanging variation in the French is still constantly the centre of attention. It is possible even, that it was because of his successes with Black after ...dxe4 that Nimzowitsch became such a fervent devotee of 3 e5.

In the Four Knights Game – 1...e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗b5 – it was Rubinstein who suggested the variation with 4... ♘d4!? (nowadays that is how Kramnik replies; it was because of the knight move that White stopped playing this opening). In the Chigorin Variation of the Ruy Lopez, in reply to the clamping d4-d5 he devised an elegant defensive plan with ...♘c6-d8, ...♘f6-e8, ...g7-g6 and ...♘g7, ...f7-f6 and ...♘f7, as in his games with Thomas and Bogoljubow (Baden-Baden 1925).

The master also left his deep mark in the Open Variation of the Ruy Lopez. The following game occurred in one of Rubinstein's triumphal tournaments of 1912 (San Sebastian, Pistyan, Breslau and Vilna).

Game 65

A.Alekhine-A.Rubinstein

All-Russian master tournament,
Vilna 1912
Ruy Lopez C83

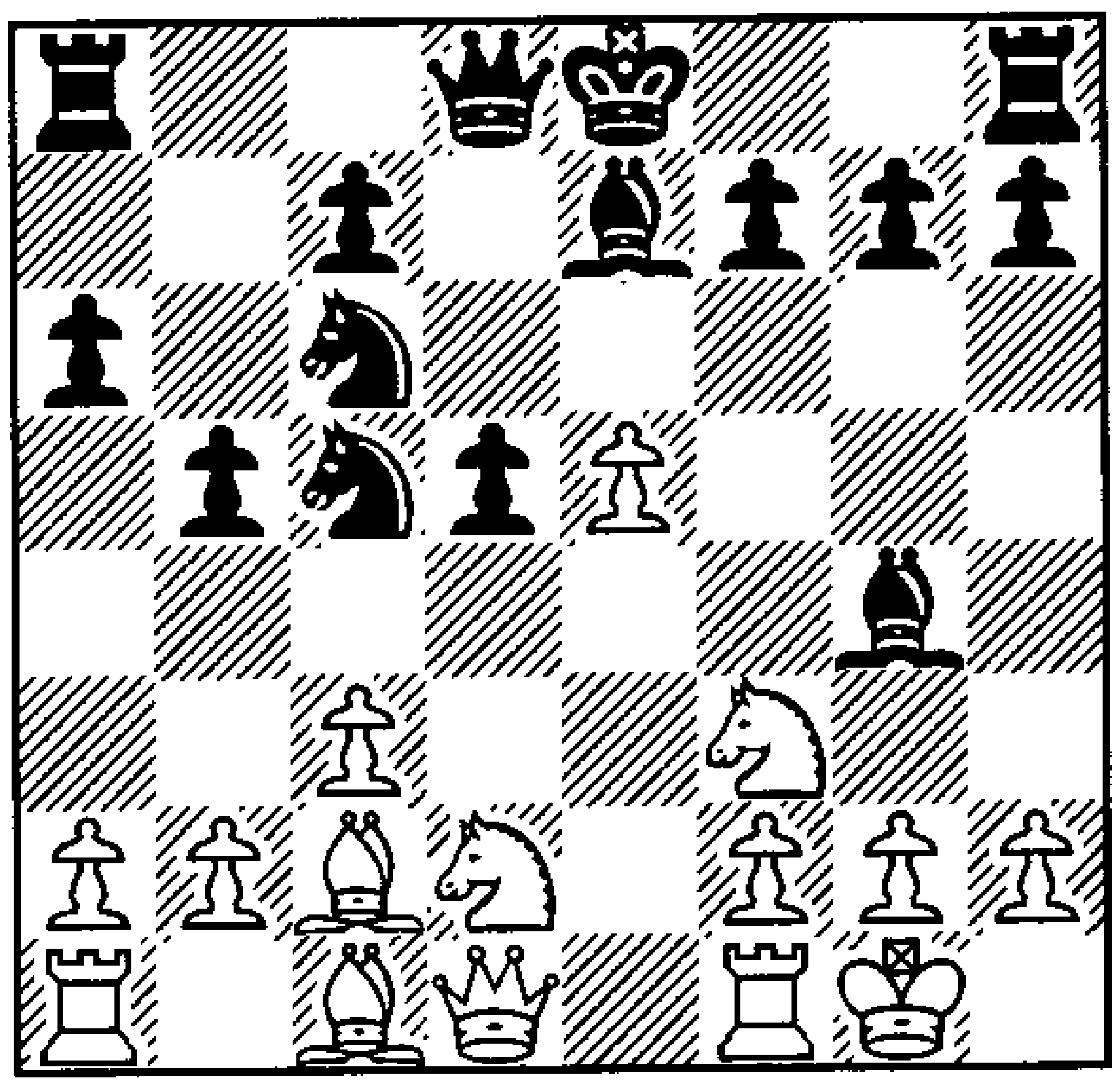
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♘xe4 6 d4 b5 7 ♗b3 d5 8 dxe5 ♗e6 9 c3 ♗e7

9...♗c5 is more popular (*Game Nos.28, 66*). Towards the end of the 20th century, largely through the efforts of Korchnoi, this move so troubled White, that he switched to the variation 9 ♘bd2 ♘c5 10 c3, allowing, apart from 10...♗g4 11 ♗e2 ♗e7, the problematic 10...d4!?

10 ♘bd2 ♘c5 11 ♗c2 ♗g4

By transposition of moves one of the critical positions has been reached. 11...0-0 is also played, as well as 11...d4!? – earlier this was rejected because of 12 ♘e4 ♗d5? 13 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 14 ♘xd4 (Tarrasch-Post, Mannheim 1914), or 12...dxc3?! 13 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 14 ♗e4! (Capablanca-Chajes, New York 1915 and 1916).

But then after 12 ♘e4 they found 12...d3! 13 ♘xc5 dxc2 14 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 15 ♘xe6 fxe6 16 ♗e3 ♖d5 17 ♖fc1 ♘xe5 18 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 with equal chances and then they began trying 12 ♘b3 d3 13 ♗b1 (13 ♘xc5 dxc2 14 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 is level) 13...♘xb3 14 axb3 ♗f5 15 ♗e3 0-0 16 ♗d4!? (16 ♘d4 ♘xd4 17 cxd4 c5!) 16...♕d5 17 ♖e1 with a sharp game (Topalov-Piket, Antwerp 1997), or 12 cxd4 ♘xd4 13 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 14 ♘f3 (14 ♕e2 0-0) 14...♕xd1 15 ♖xd1 0-0 (slightly worse is 15...♗g4 16 ♗e3 0-0 17 h3! Leko-Khalifman, Budapest 6th matchgame 2000) 16 ♘g5 h6 17 ♗h7+ ♔h8 18 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 19 ♗e4 ♖ad8 20 ♗e3 ♗g5 with equality (Anand-A. Greenfeld, Haifa rapidplay 2000).



12 h3?!

This and White's subsequent inaccuracies are explained by the 20-year-old Alekhine's lack of experience and the fact that the theory of this variation was undeveloped. Is it really worth driving the bishop to g6, if it is aiming for there anyway? Today the main line is 12 ♖e1! ♕d7, for example:

1) 13 ♘b3 ♘e6 14 h3 ♗h5 15 ♗f5 ♘cd8 (or 15...♗g6 16 ♗g4 h5 17 ♗xe6 fxe6 18 ♗e3 0-0 19 ♘c5 ♗xc5 20 ♗xc5 ♖f4 21 ♘d4 ♖e4 with level chances Leko-Piket, Wijk aan Zee 2000) 16 ♗e3 a5 17 ♗c5 a4 18 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 with approximate equality (Karpov-Korchnoi, Baguio City 28th matchgame 1978);

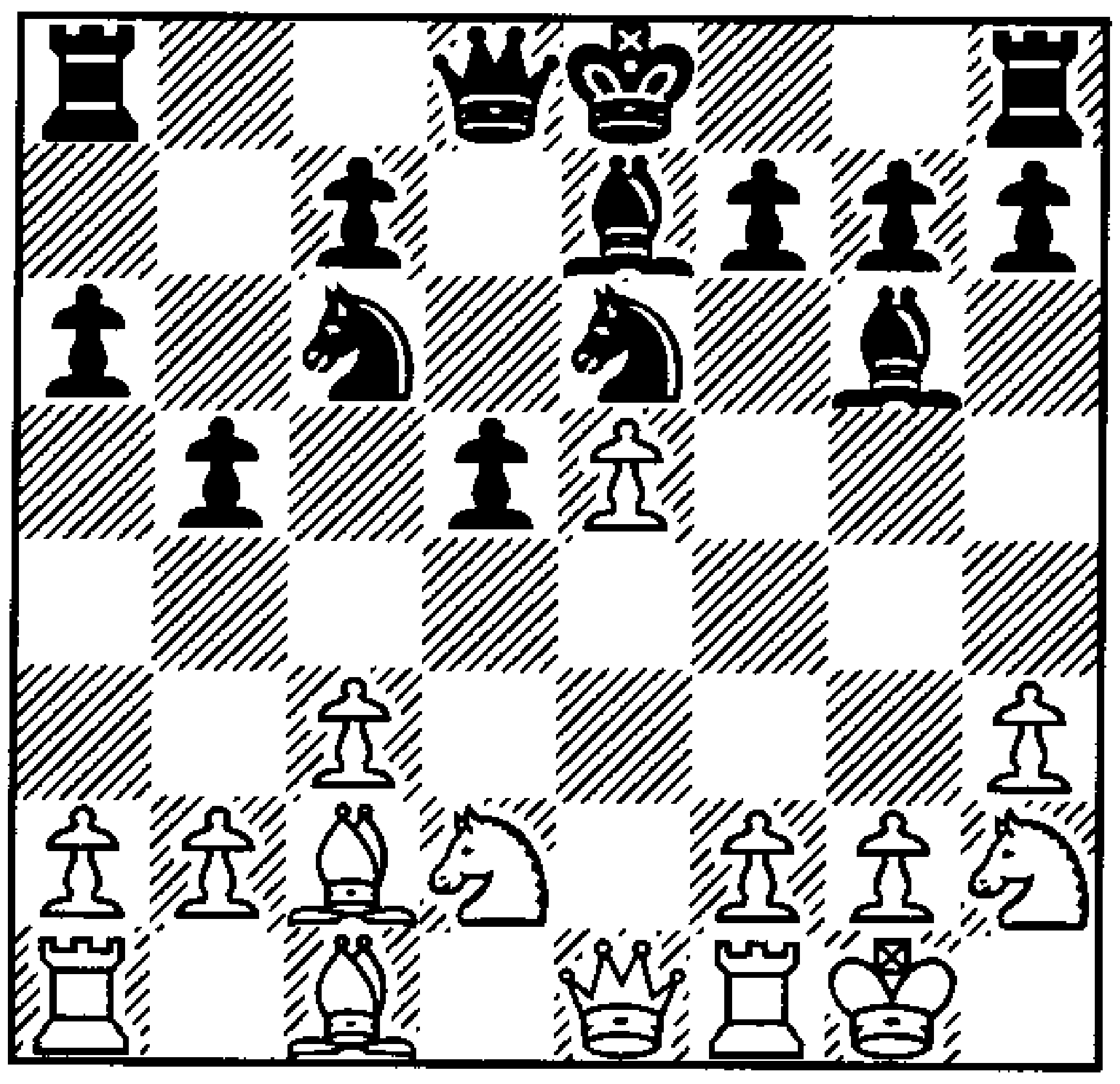
2) 13 ♘f1!? (Bronstein's cunning manoeuvre) 13...♖d8 (13...♗h5 14 ♘g3 ♗g6 15 h4!? 0-0 16 h5 is also played, which demonstrates again that 12 h3 is unnecessary) 14 ♘e3 ♗h5 (dangerous is 14...♗xf3 15 ♕xf3 ♘xe5 16 ♕g3 ♘g6 17 ♘f5 ♘e6 18 h4 ♗f6 19 ♗g5 etc.) 15 b4!? (15 ♘f5 0-0) 15...♘e6 (15...♘e4? 16 ♘xd5) 16 g4! ♗g6 17 ♘f5 0-0 18 a4 ♖fe8 19 axb5 axb5 20 ♗d3 with appreciable pressure (Galkin-Sorokin, Ekaterinburg 1997; Khalifman-Marin, Istanbul Olympiad 2000).

12...♗h5 13 ♕e1?! (13 ♖e1 is still better) **13...♘e6 14 ♘h2?!**

White wants to advance his f- and g-pawns with gain of tempi, but an unpleasant surprise awaits him. A game from our times went 14 ♗f5 ♗g6 15 ♗xg6 fxg6! (following the classic example!) 16 ♘b3 0-0 (16...♕d7!?) 17 ♘fd4 ♘cxd4 18 ♘xd4 ♕d7 19 ♗e3 c5 20 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 21 f4 g5 with excellent play for Black (Y. Grünfeld-Stean, Skara 1980).

14...♗g6

What should White do now?



15 ♗xg6 (later 15 ♗b1!? was played, with the idea of f2-f4) **15...fxg6!!**

But this is a surprise: in such cases every follower of the Steinitz School would without thinking have captured towards the centre (...hxg6), whereas Akiba evaluated the position concretely. A phenomenal move (for the sake of which, strictly speaking, this not very outstanding game is given here). Of course, today this is already a typical procedure, but then... How hard it was to go against the established dogmas! The game is important mainly because it clearly demonstrates that, thanks to his chess genius, Rubinstein was capable of blazing completely new trails.

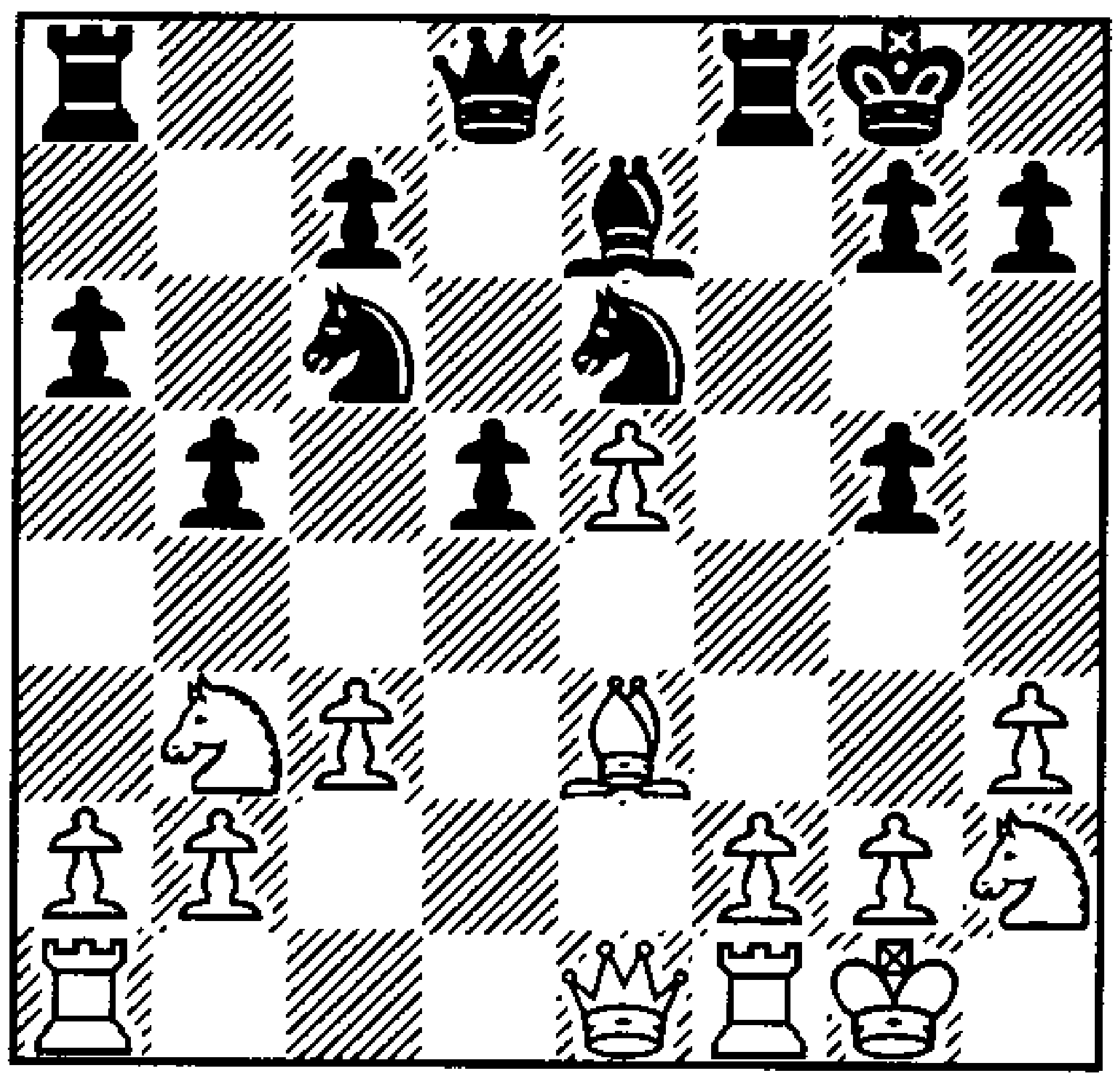
16 ♘b3

Hardly any better was 16 ♘df3 0-0 17 ♗e3 ♖f5! with the intention of ...♕d7 and ...♖af8.

16...g5!

Preventing the supporting of the e5-pawn. Although 16...0-0 17 f4 a5 18 ♗e3 a4 19 ♘d4 ♘cxd4 20 cxd4 c5 21 dxc5 d4 22 ♗d2 ♕d5 was also acceptable.

17 ♗e3 0-0



18 ♘f3?

Again a poor move – one senses that the young Alekhine was stunned. It was not essential to lose this position, and White could still have saved himself by tempo play: 18 ♕e2 ♘xe5 19 ♗xg5 ♘xg5 20 ♕xe5 ♕d6 21 ♘g4 with equality.

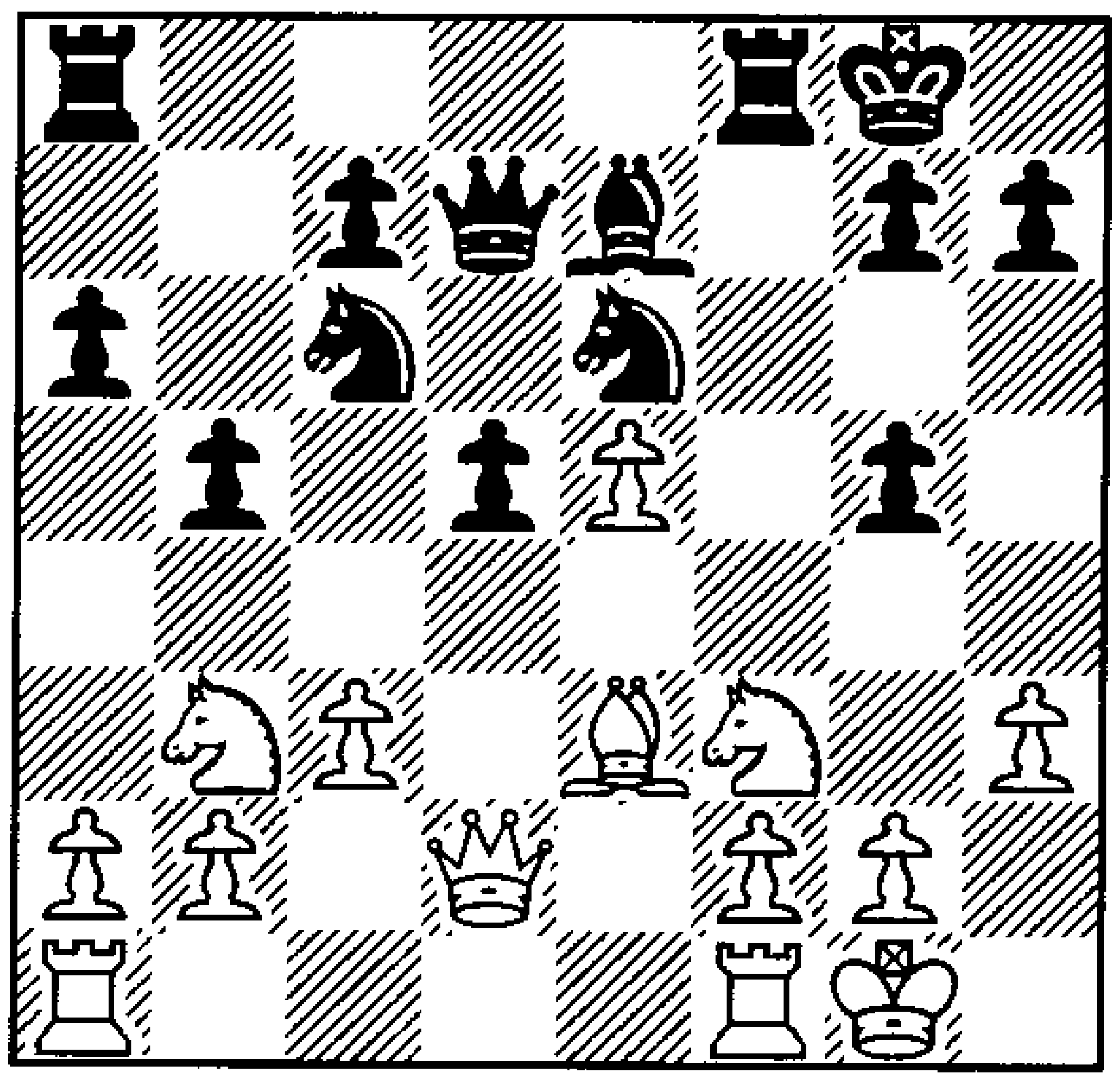
18...♕d7?

Undoubtedly stronger was the immediate

18...♖xf3! 19 gxf3 ♘xe5 20 ♕e2 ♗d6 21 ♘d4 ♕d7 with excellent compensation for the exchange. However, as Razuvaev and Murakhveri write, 'Rubinstein could sometimes procrastinate, but hurry – never!'

19 ♕d2?

The decisive mistake. The only way to exploit Black's delay was by 19 ♕e2, and nothing terrible for White is apparent, for example: 19...♖f5 20 ♘bd4 ♘cxd4 21 cxd4 ♖af8 22 a4!? (22 ♘d2 c5) 22...♖xf3 23 gxf3 c5 24 dxc5 d4 25 ♖fd1 ♗xc5 26 axb5 axb5 27 ♗c1 with an unclear game.



19...♖xf3! (better late than never...) **20 gxf3 ♘xe5 21 ♕e2 ♖f8 22 ♘d2 ♘g6!**

In order to jump to f4, weaving a mating net.

23 ♖fe1 ♗d6 24 f4?! (desperation) **24...♘exf4 25 ♕f1 ♘xh3+ 26 ♔h1 g4 27 ♕e2 ♕f5 0-1**

The threat of ...♕h5 is irresistible, and White resigned.

As we have seen, Rubinstein was great in all stages of the game – in the opening, and in the middlegame, and in the endgame. But, in contrast to Tarrasch or Nimzowitsch, he never related his achievements in print, and so for a long time his special role in the development of chess was suppressed and remained underestimated. Careful analysis shows that modern chess, proceeding from the Botvinnik era, is very strongly influenced by the games of Rubinstein, who was, essentially, one of the fathers of modern chess history.

In the period 1909-1912 the strength of his play was certainly sufficient for him to issue a challenge to Lasker. A match between them at that time would have been very interesting, as would somewhat later – but also before the War! – have been the matches Lasker vs. Capablanca and Rubinstein vs. Capablanca. Alas, history knows of numerous instances when the logic of events was disrupted... Either the War or, more probably, deficiencies of character, prevented Akiba from making the last, decisive step, and hopes of seeing a match between him and Lasker were never realised.

Rubinstein was an extraordinarily taciturn, modest and diffident person, but more importantly – completely impractical. By contrast, the enterprising Capablanca, after winning San Sebastian 1911 (only half a point ahead of his rival, who defeated him in their individual game and did not suffer a single defeat!), he promptly issued a challenge to Lasker. And although after Rubinstein's series of brilliant tournament victories in 1912 his rights to a match with Lasker were undisputed, negotiations with the world champion were manifestly delayed.

Talking about Lasker as a great psychologist, Botvinnik explains: 'He knew when he should avoid a match (the opponent was in good form) and when, on the contrary, he should aim for a fight! That is undoubtedly how he operated with Tarrasch, with Rubinstein, and with Capablanca... But should this be condemned? There were no rules then for organising competitions for the world championship, and each could act at his own discretion. In this respect Lasker differed from Steinitz: the latter never avoided a contest.'

Yes, Lasker had a clear position regarding this: 'I was ready to play a match with any challenger, only if the chess world wished to see this match and confirmed this wish not only verbally, but also materially. Of course, I certainly did not want to be an object of exploitation. I was threatened by the fate of players, who either died of hunger, such as Kieseritzky, Zukertort or Mackenzie, or, like Pillsbury and Steinitz, ended up on social security and, degraded, in mental disorder, ended their days in hospital. I was ready to give my skill and thinking to the chess world and thereby enliven it, assisting the development of the game, but I demanded that it should take on the responsibility for this and bear it to the end.'

How very true! As, however, was the champion's rebuff to those who considered that chess could not be recognised as a profession: 'The millions of enthusiasts, who play through the games of masters, learn from them and obtain spiritual pleasure, should not hold such a point of view. Using such arguments, the musical world could deny a living to talented professional musicians, which, of course, would be obviously unjust. Only those who devote themselves entirely to a particular matter can create something great in that field.'

Settling Accounts in St Petersburg

The most significant chess event of those years was the super-tournament St Petersburg 1914, with the participation of the 45-year-old world champion Lasker and both the young contenders for this title – Rubinstein and Capablanca. For the first time the three leading chess organisations in the world – Russia, Germany and Great Britain – agreed that the winner of the tournament (if it should not be Lasker) would gain the right to play a match for the world championship under jointly drawn-up conditions, and moreover, he would automatically receive the title in the event of the champion defaulting! And Lasker, satisfied with a high appearance fee, agreed to this, thereby imparting an unusual intrigue to the event.

Such a distinctive candidates tournament was not entirely fair: a player who finished second after the champion would not gain any rights at all. Also imperfect was the tournament formula: a preliminary all-play-all of 11 participants, and then a double-double final for the first five... with the preliminary results carried forward.

The exceptionally nervy, tense battle in the first stage produced a regrettable sensation: Rubinstein, who was out of practice, did not finish in the cherished five, letting slip a serious advantage against Capablanca (*Game No.82*) and then losing 'grievously' to Lasker and Alekhine...

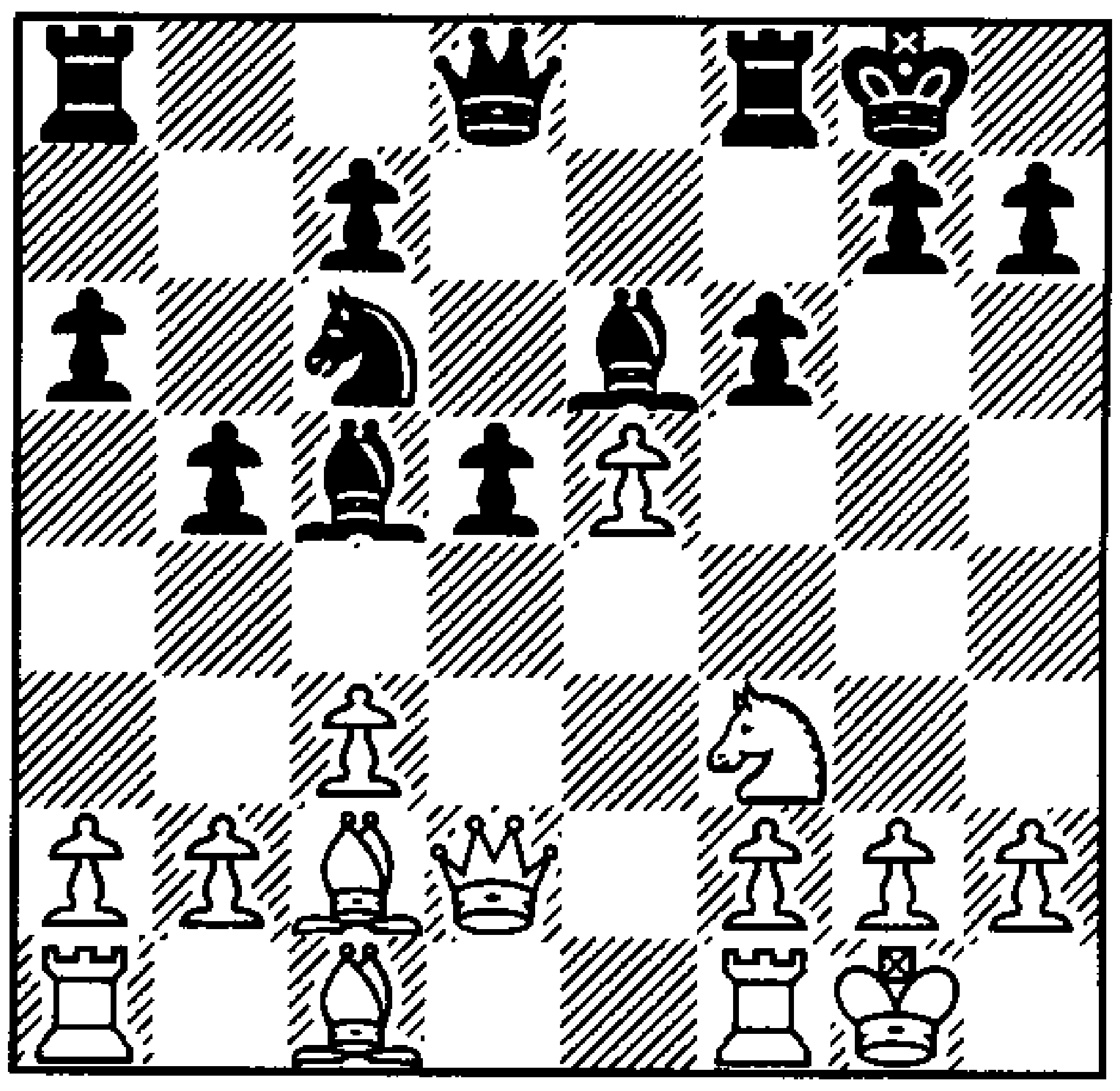
The Lasker-Rubinstein game was of great competitive significance. The champion struck his dangerous opponent a terrible blow, outplaying him literally out of nothing ... in a rook endgame – the stage where it was generally held that Akiba had no equal! This ending also found its way into books on the endgame.

Game 66

Em.Lasker-A.Rubinstein

St Petersburg 1914,
preliminary tournament
Ruy Lopez C82

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♘xe4 6 d4 b5 7 ♗b3 d5 8 dxe5 ♗e6 9 c3 ♗c5 (9...♗e7 – *Game No.65*) **10 ♘bd2 0-0 11 ♗c2 ♘xd2?!** (nowadays 11...♗f5! is in vogue) **12 ♕xd2! f6**



'The comparatively best reply.' (Keres) Chigorin played 12...♘e7 (*Game No.28*).

13 exf6 (13 ♕d3!?) **13...♖xf6 14 ♘d4**

14 ♘g5 ♗f5 15 a4 or 14 b4 ♗b6 15 a4! is considered more energetic.

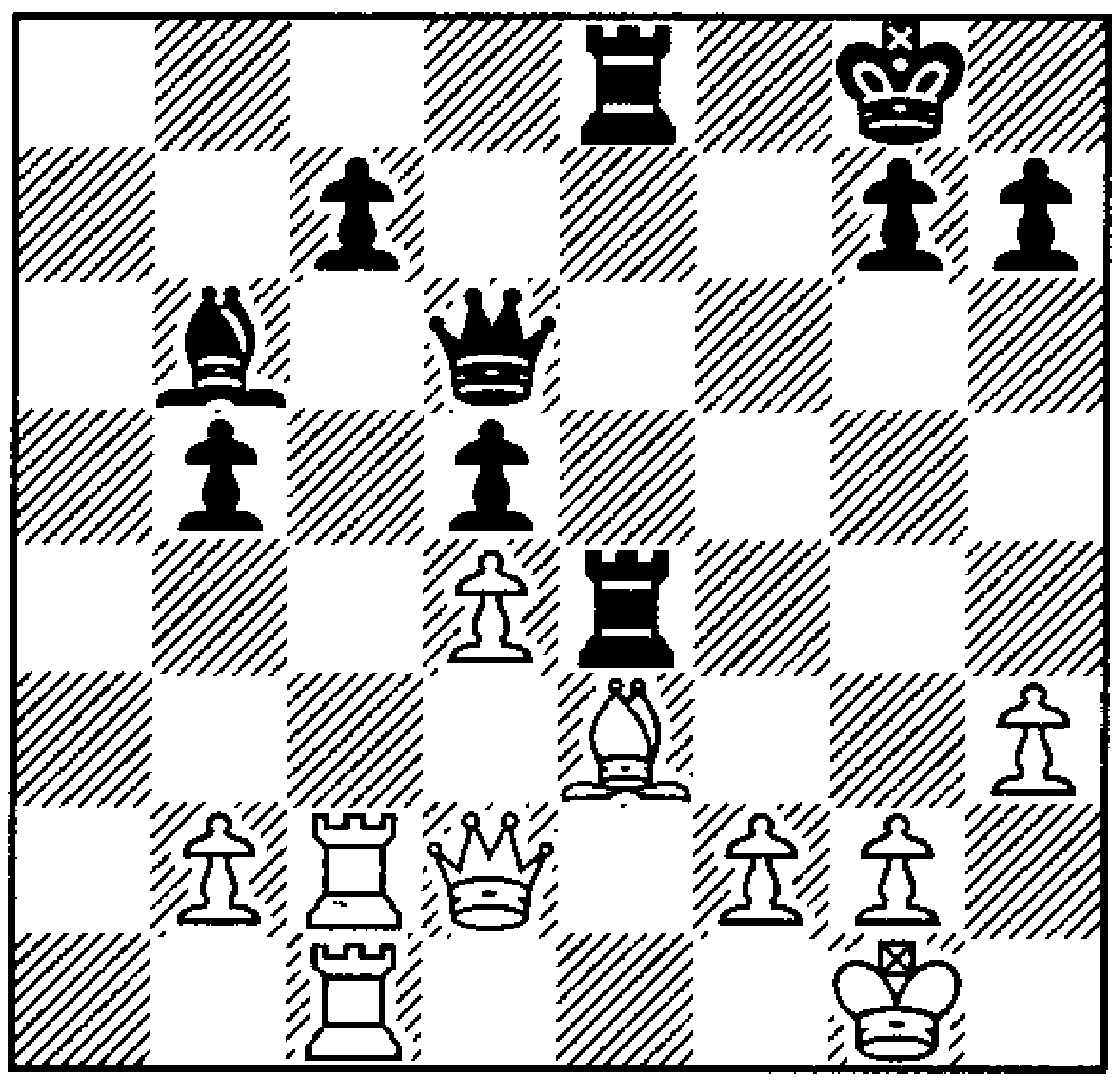
14...♘xd4 15 cxd4 ♗b6

'After Tarrasch's recommendation of 15...♗d6!? there follows 16 ♕e2 h6 17 a4 ♖b8 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♗e3 with advantage to White.' (Keres) However, according to Larsen, stronger is 16...♕d7! with equal chances.

16 a4 ♖b8 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♕c3 ♕d6 19 ♗e3

The opinions of the theoreticians regarding this position are divided: some think that, thanks to his pressure on the c-file, White has the advantage, others that Black has a solid defence.

19...♗f5 20 ♖fc1 ♗xc2 21 ♖xc2 ♖e8 22 ♖ac1 ♖fe6 23 h3 ♖e4 24 ♕d2



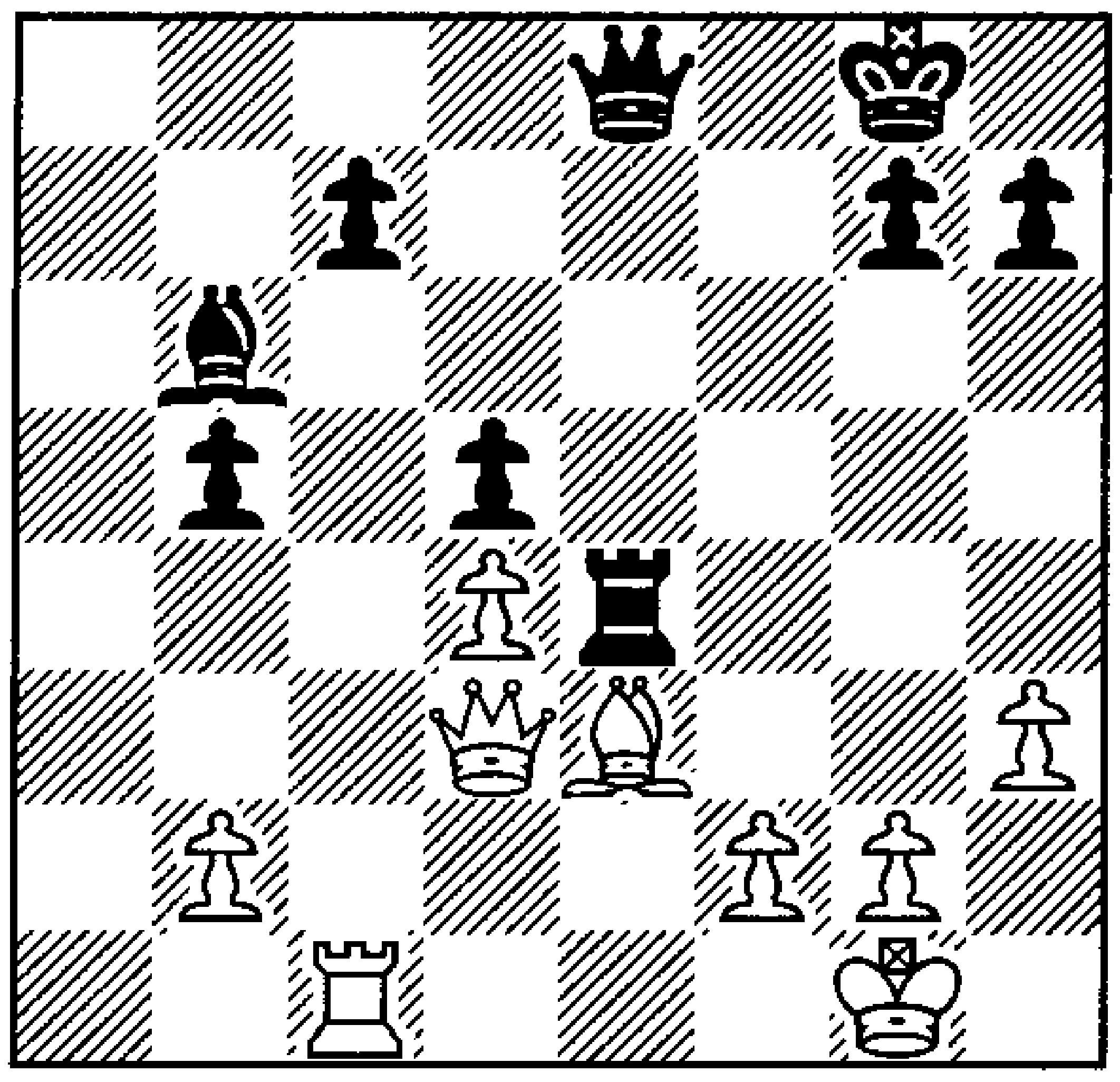
24...♖8e6

Allowing White to exchange a pair of rooks. 24...♕e7 (after 24...♕d7?! 25 ♖c6 the b5-pawn is threatened) 25 ♖c6 (25 ♕d3 ♕b4) 25...♕h4 26 ♖d1 ♕e7 27 ♕c3 does not offer full equality, although here it will not be possible to play f2-f3.

25 ♖c6 ♕d7

Quite safe was 25...♕xc6!? 26 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 27 ♕b4 ♗xd4! 28 ♗xd4 (28 ♕xb5 ♖c5) 28...♖c4 29 ♕xb5 ♖cxd4 30 ♕b8+ ♔f7 31 ♕xc7+ ♖e7 with equality.

26 ♖xe6 ♕xe6 27 ♕d3 ♕e8

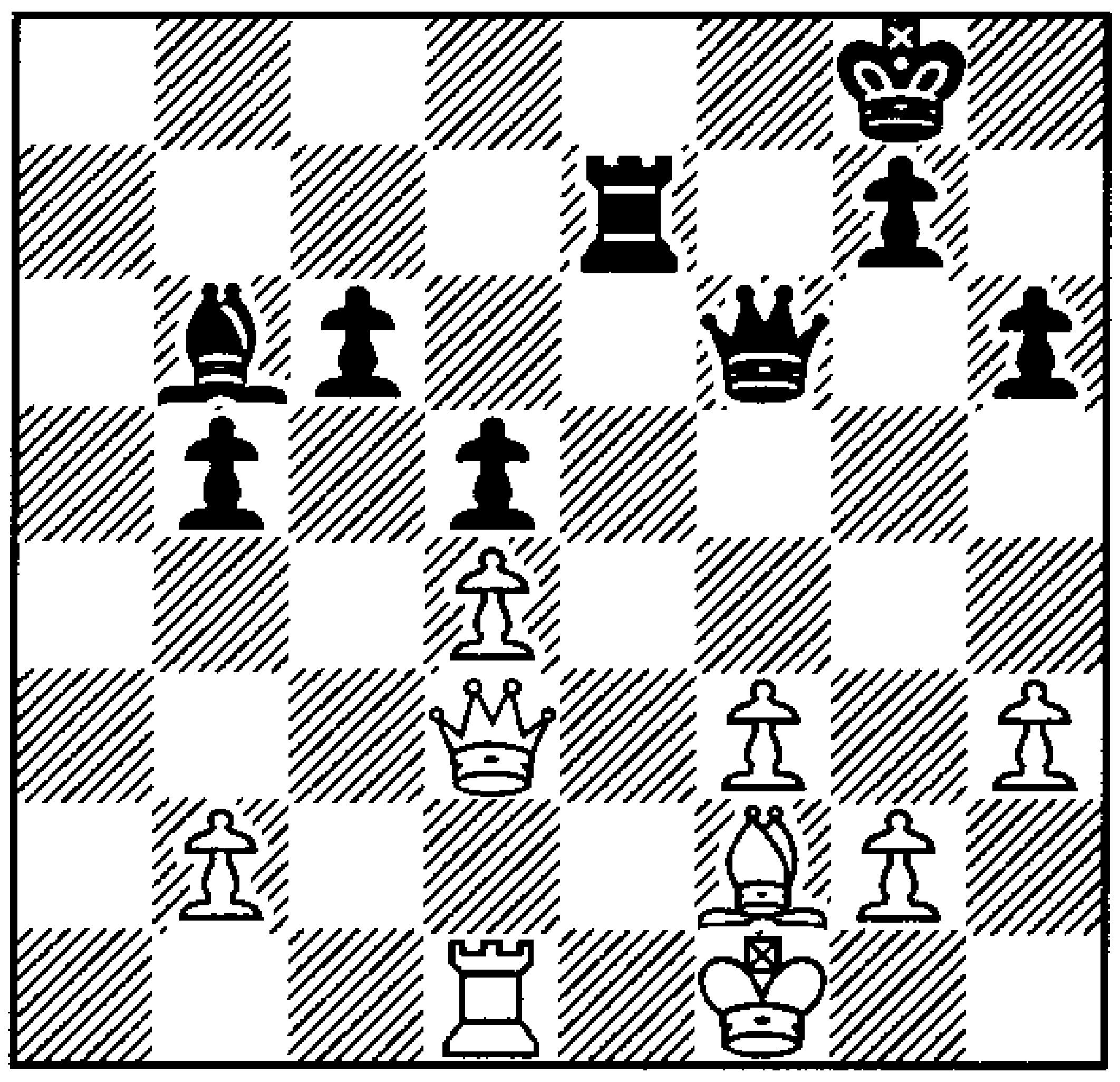


Black appears to have a quite normal position, and at least White does not have anything serious. But Lasker, not at all concerned by this, continues playing in his usual manner – for a long time he moves here and there, creating in the end an outstanding example of manoeuvring play!

28 ♕c3 ♔f7 29 ♕d3 ♔g8 30 ♕c3 ♕e6 31 ♖a1 ♕e8 32 ♔f1 h6 33 ♕d3 ♔f7 34 ♖c1 ♔g8 35 ♕b3 ♕f7 36 ♖d1 c6

Possibly an inaccuracy, but after 36...♕d7 37 f3 Black's position is somewhat inferior.

37 f3! ♕f6 38 ♕d3 ♖e7 39 ♗f2



Gradually White has gained a 'plus': he has advanced f2-f3, he has fixed the pawn at c6, and he wants to exploit his pawn majority on the kingside. And yet, despite certain problems (the main one being a lack of counterplay!), Black should be able to draw.

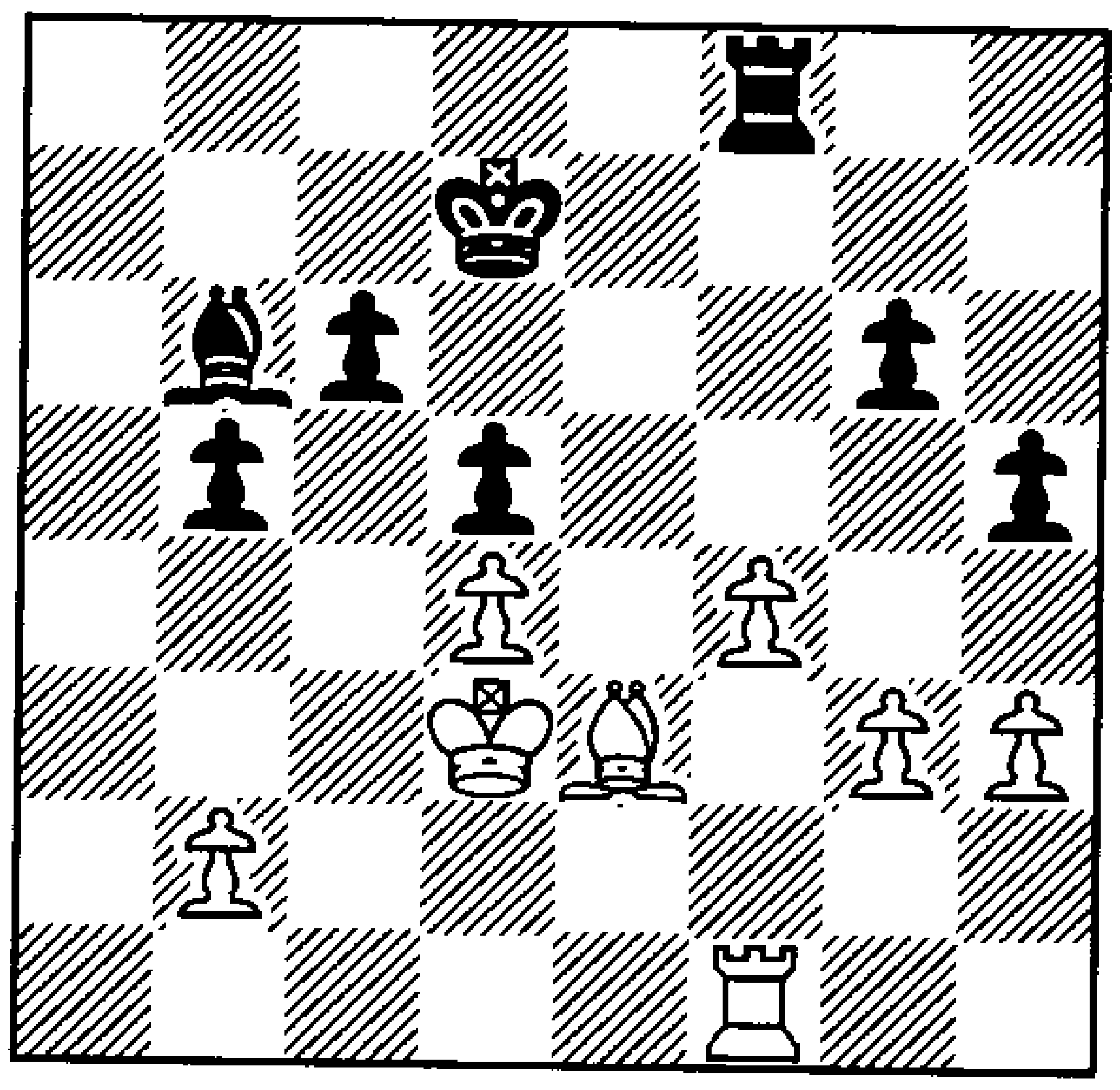
39...♕d6 40 ♕c2 ♔f7 41 ♖c1 ♖e6 42

♕f5+ ♖f6 43 ♕e5! ♖e6

43...♕d7 came into consideration, avoiding the exchange of queens, which turns out to favour White: he activates his king and sets about creating a passed pawn.

44 ♕xd6 ♖xd6 45 ♔e2 ♔e7 46 ♔d3 ♖g6 47 g3! ♖f6 48 f4 ♔d7 49 ♖e1 ♖f8 50 ♖a1 h5 51 ♗e3 g6 52 ♖f1

With the intention of g3-g4 intending f4-f5. Stealthily, step by step, White imperceptibly increases his advantage.



52...♔d6?

In my opinion, this is already the decisive mistake: 52...♔e6! 53 g4 ♗c7! was essential. White has made all his useful moves – what is he to do next? The computer 'looks at' the sharp 54 f5+! gxf5 55 ♗h6! (55 gxh5? f4) 55...♖f7 56 g5, but after 56...♖h7 (but not 56...f4? 57 g6 ♖f6 58 ♖e1+ ♔f5 59 g7 ♖g6 60 ♖e8 and the pawn queens) 57 ♖g1 ♖h8 58 g6 ♖g8 59 g7 ♗d6 60 ♖g6+ ♔e7 61 ♔e3 c5 62 ♗g5+ ♔d7 63 ♗f6 ♔e8 64 dxc5 ♔f7 65 ♖h6 ♗xc5+ 66 ♔f4 d4 67 ♖xh5 ♔xf6 68 ♖xf5+ ♔xg7 69 ♖xc5 ♖d8 70 ♖xb5 d3 71 ♖g5+ ♔f6 72 ♖g1 ♖h8 Black gains a draw.

53 g4! (proceeding to create a passed pawn) **53...hxg4**

If 53...♔e6, then 54 f5+! gxf5 55 gxh5 ♗c7 56 ♖e1 ♔d7 57 ♗g5.

54 hxg4 c5?!

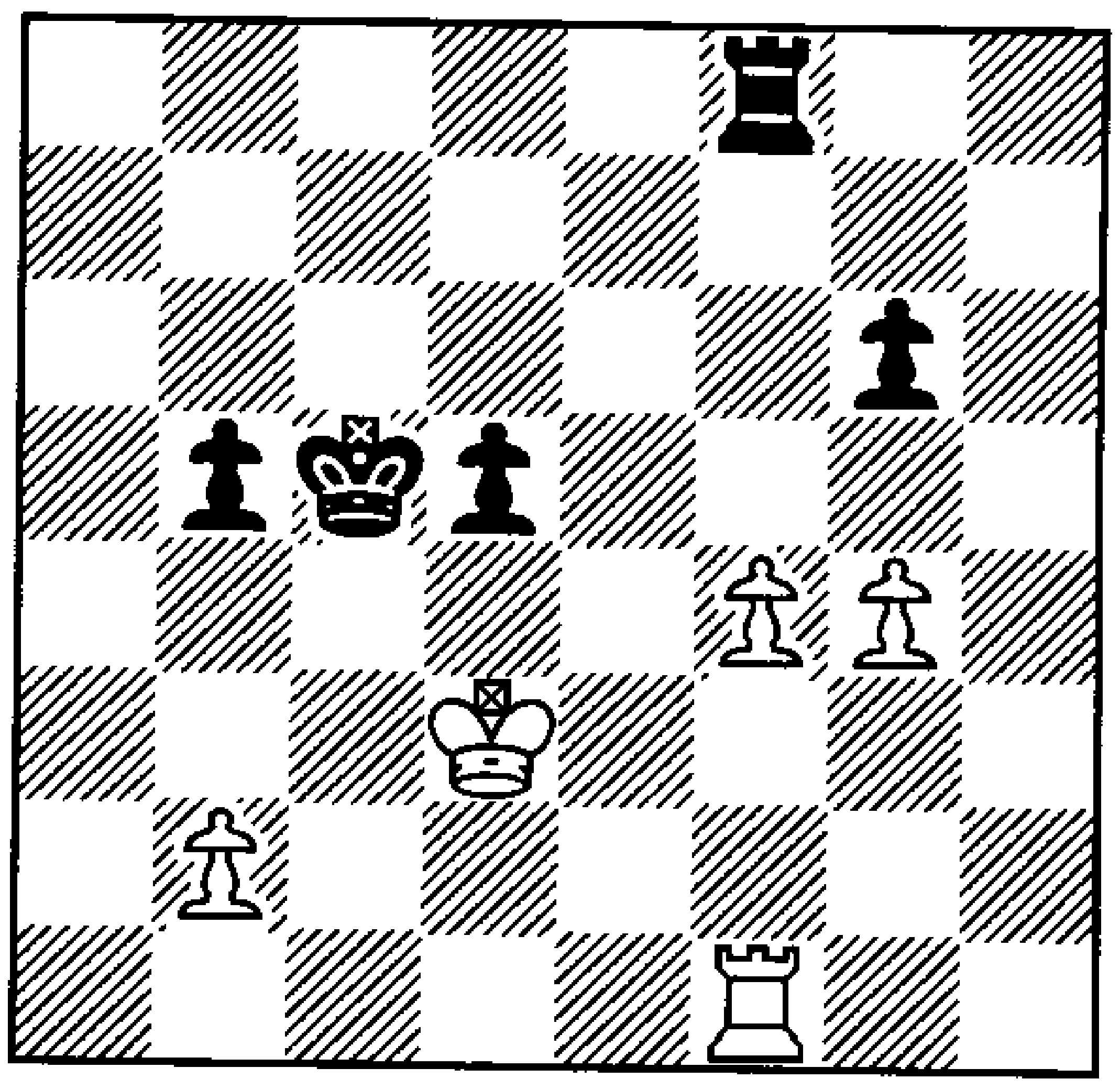
An attempt to create his own passed pawn. One can argue about whether this should have been played, but after 54...♔e6 55 ♖h1 and ♖h6 White simply has an advantage for free and every chance of winning – evidently Rubinstein did not believe that he would be able to defend here.

With amazing rapidity the position has been transformed from being almost equal to one that is highly unpleasant, even lost for Black. This truly is a gift of the great masters: the ability to create something... out of nothing!

A further paradoxical feature of this game is that according to all the rules White has a 'bad' bishop (running up against its own d4-pawn), whereas Black's is 'good'. But with the rooks on and a superior pawn formation – a healthy extra pawn on the kingside, whereas the b2- and d4-pawns restrain three black pawns – this does not play any role! And in the end, trying to survive, Black himself goes in for the exchange of bishops... Of course, Rubinstein, a great master of rook endings, fully understood the danger of his position, but he was hoping that he would be saved by the limited material remaining.

55 dxc5+ ♗xc5 56 ♗xc5+ ♔xc5

A classic position.



57 f5

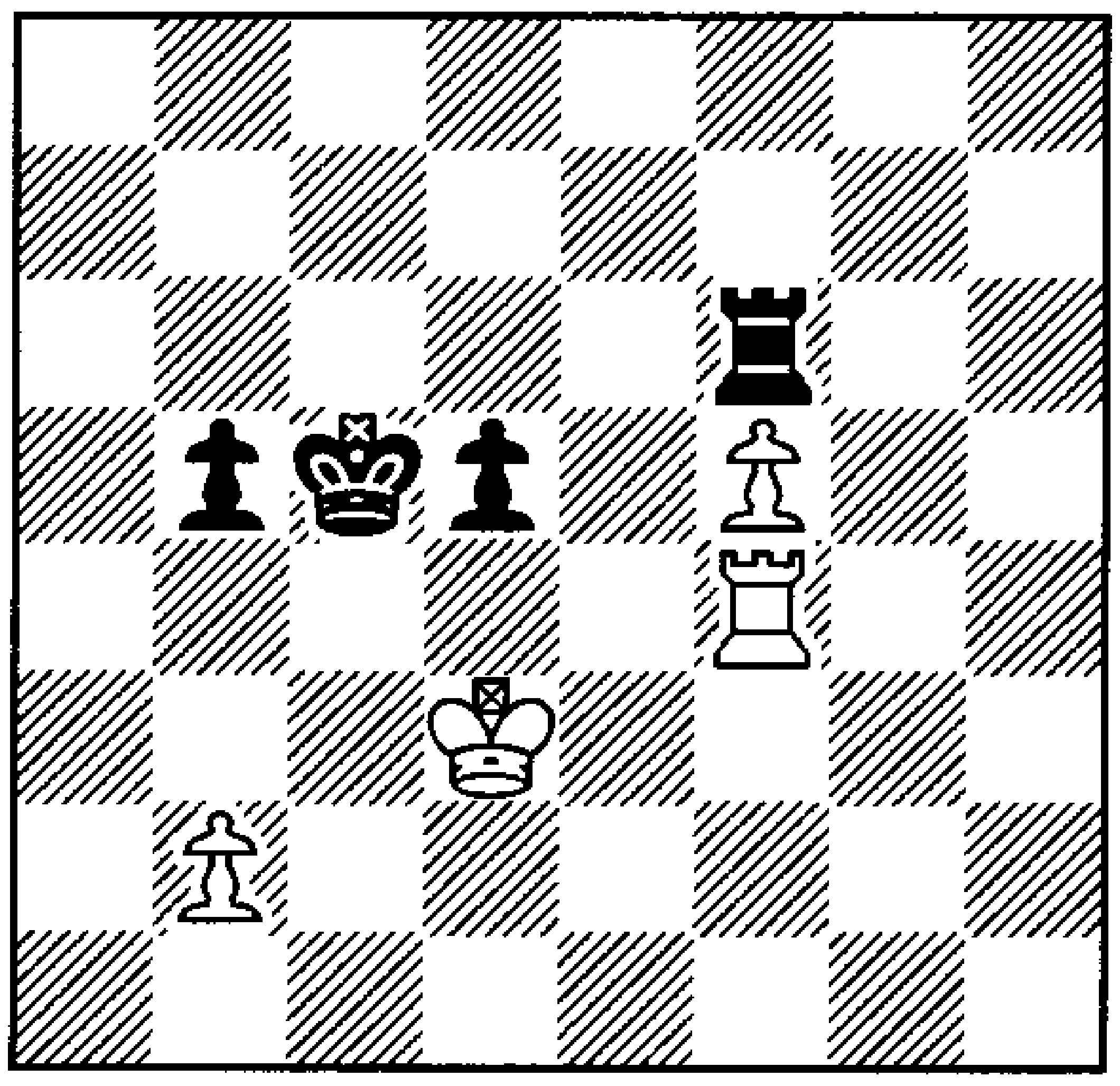
'White creates an outside passed pawn, with his rook ideally placed – "*à la* Tarrasch", as though urging on the passed pawn from behind, whereas the black rook is passive. The white king is also well placed: it stands in the path of the opponent's passed pawn, securely blocking it.' (Averbakh)

57...gxf5 58 gxf5 ♖f6

'The pawn has to be stopped. After 58...d4 59 f6 ♔d5 60 f7 ♔e5 61 b4 ♔d5 62 ♖f4 ♔e5 63 ♖e4+ ♔f5 64 ♖e1! ♔f6 65 ♔xd4 ♖d8+ 66 ♔c5 ♔xf7 67 ♔xb5 White wins easily.' (Averbakh)

59 ♖f4

The last critical position in this amazing game. Here, with the help of a computer, I was fortunate enough to discover something.

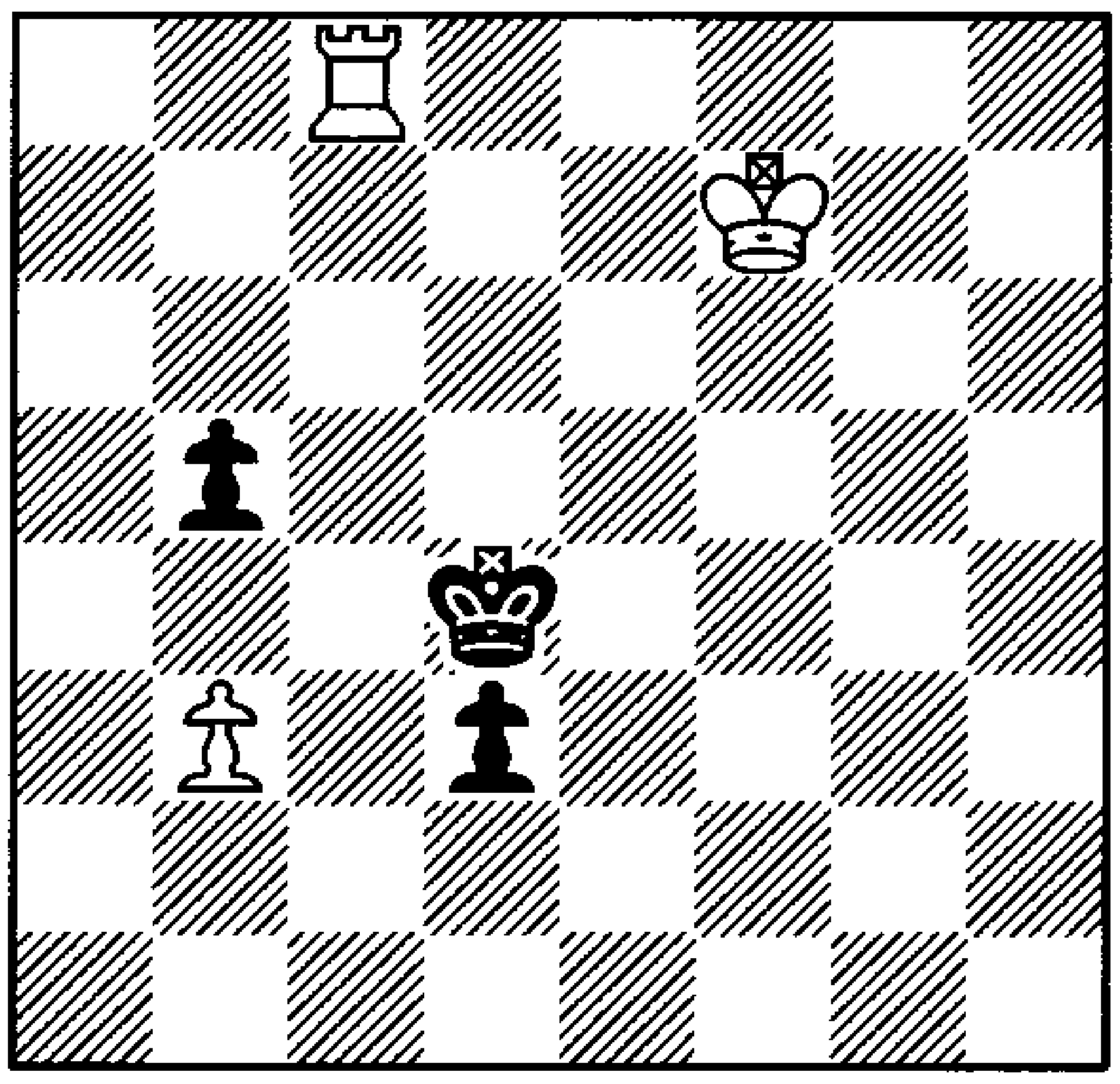


59...b4?

The question mark is mine: by occupying the b4-square with his pawn, Rubinstein deprives himself of any counterplay! True, in the opinion of Levenfish and Smyslov, 'Black no longer has any useful moves: if 59...d4, then 60 ♔e4 wins. This, according to Averbakh, would merely have 'complicated the play somewhat, for example: 60...♖d6 (if instead 60...♔c4 then 61 ♔e5 ♖f8 62 ♖xd4+ ♔b3 63 f6 wins) 61 ♖f3 ♔c4 62 b3+ (*? – G. K.*) 62...♔b4 63 ♖d3 (63 f6? d3) 63...♔c5 64 ♔e5 ♖d8 65 f6 ♖e8+ 66 ♔f5 ♔d5 (66...♖e3? 67 ♖xe3 dxe3 68 f7 and wins) 67 f7 ♖f8 68 ♔f6 ♔e4 69 ♖d1 d3 70 ♔e7 ♖h8 71 f8♕ ♖xf8 72 ♔xf8 ♔e3 (*? – G. K.*) 73 ♔e7 d2 74 ♔d6 and wins.'

But, surprising though it may seem, after 72...♔d4! 73 ♔e7 ♔c3 74 ♔d6 ♔xb3 75 ♖xd3+ ♔c4 the position is a draw!

Then I tried 69 ♖g3!? (instead of 69 ♖d1) 69...d3 70 ♖g8 ♖xf7+ 71 ♔xf7 ♔d4 72 ♖c8!



Analysis diagram

72...b4!! (the only move; if 72...d2? White wins by the study-like 73 b4!! d1♕ 74 ♖d8+ ♔c3 75 ♖xd1 ♔xb4 76 ♔e6 ♔c3 77 ♖c1+!! – also the only move, gaining a decisive tempo! – 77...♔d3 78 ♖b1 ♔c4 79 ♔e5 b4 80 ♔e4 b3 81 ♖c1+), and although through inertia the computer shows a win for White, nothing works for him: after 73 ♖c4+ ♔e3 74 ♖c7 Black is again saved by the only move 74...♔d4! (backwards!), and if 73 ♔f6, then 73...d2 74 ♔f5 d1♕ 75 ♖d8+ ♔c3 76 ♖xd1 ♔xb3. A little study!

In addition, it transpires that after 62 b3+? the reply 62...♔c5!? (apart from 62...♔b4) is also acceptable. Here too no win is apparent: 63 f6 d3 64 f7 d2 65 ♖f1 ♖d8 66 ♔e3 ♔b4. At this point I became excited: does 59...d4! really save Black?!

But no – the 'iron friend' quickly put everything in its place: 62 f6! (this does indeed win) 62...♖e6+ (the best defence: 62...d3 63 f7 d2 64 f8♕ d1♕ 65 ♕c8+, or 63...♖d4+ 64 ♔e3 d2 65 f8♕ d1♕ 66 ♕c8+ ♔b3 67 ♕c3+) 63 ♔f5 ♖e3 (63...♖e8 64 f7 ♖f8 65 b3+ ♔d5 66 ♔g6 wins) 64 ♖f4! (an important tempo: the rook firmly restrains the d-pawn) 64...♖e8 65 f7 ♖f8 66 ♔e6 b4 67 ♔e7 ♖h8 68 f8♕ ♖xf8 69 ♔xf8 ♔d3 70 ♔e7 b3 71 ♔d6 ♔c2 72 ♔c5 (just in time) 72...d3 73 ♔c4 d2 74 ♖f2 and White wins.

Some interesting discoveries, wouldn't you agree?... But the game, after 59...b4?, concluded much more prosaically:

60 b3 ♖f7

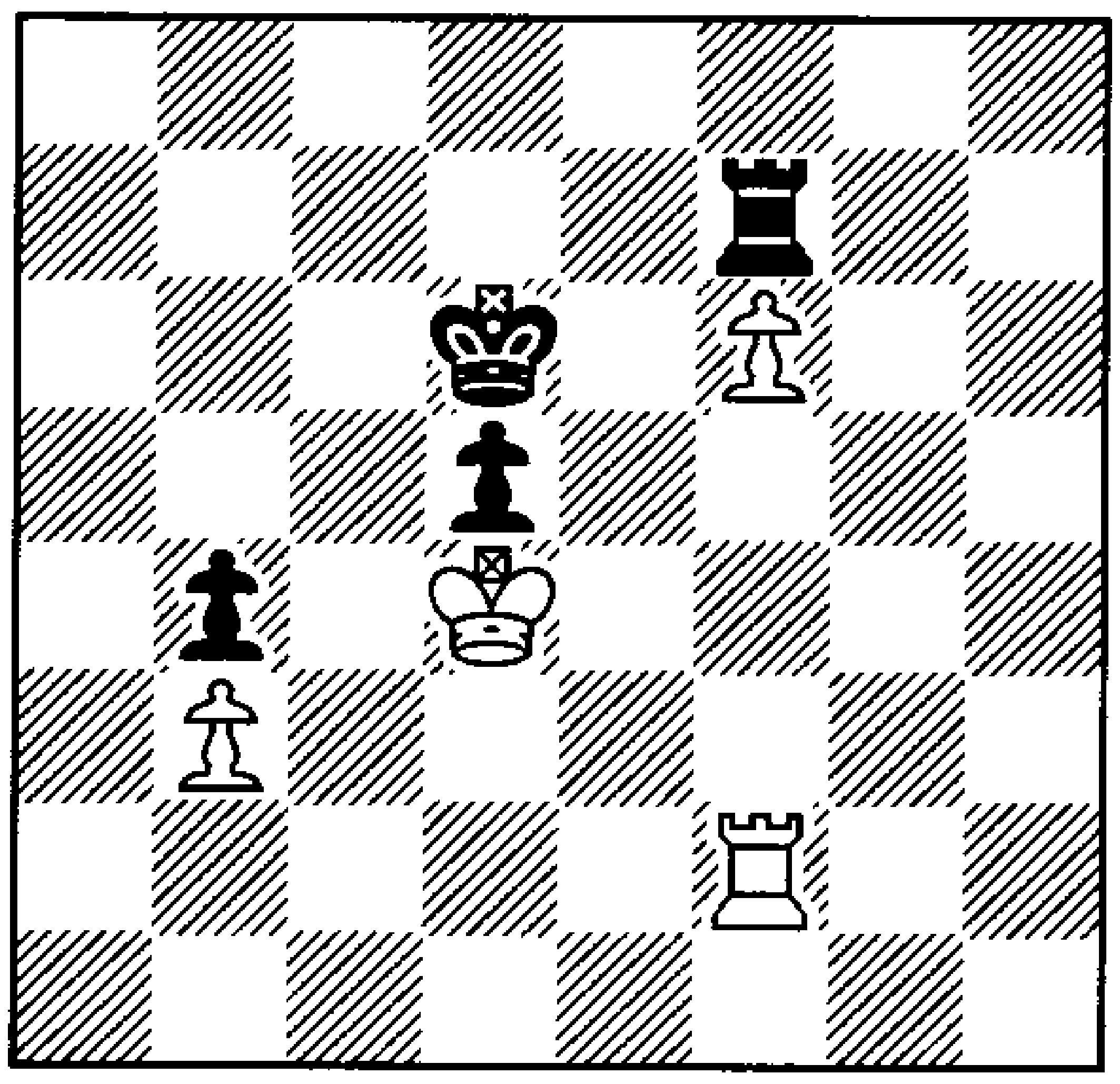
'Black is in zugzwang: 60...♔c6 61 ♔d4 ♔d6 62 ♖f2 would have led to roughly the same continuation as in the game.' (Averbakh) Even so, this should have been tried, because the winning variation is not so simple: 62...♖h6 63 f6 ♖h4+ 64 ♔e3 ♖h3+ 65 ♔f4 ♔e6 (65...♖h8 66 ♔g5 d4 67 ♔g6 ♔d5 68 f7 ♖f8 69 ♔g7 ♖xf7+ 70 ♖xf7 d3 71 ♖d7+ or 65...♖xb3 66 ♔g4!, and White manages to win: 66...♖c3 67 f7 ♖c8 68 f8♕+ ♖xf8 69 ♖xf8 ♔c5 70 ♔f3) 66 f7! ♖h8 67 ♔g5 ♖f8 68 ♔g6 d4 69 ♔g7, winning by one tempo.

61 f6

'This is the tragedy of Black's rook position. The passed pawn uses each of its moves to suffocate the defender.' (Levenfish, Smyslov)

61...♔d6 62 ♔d4 ♔e6 63 ♖f2! ♔d6

63...♖xf6? is not possible – the pawn endgame is clearly lost.



64 ♖a2!

The key and far from obvious manoeuvre, underestimated beforehand by Rubinstein. 'All this is rather simple and at the same time instructive. Black has stopped the pawn's advance, but now he is helpless against the attack by the rook from the flank. White is threatening to exchange rooks.' (Levenfish, Smyslov)

64...♖c7 (or 64...♖xf6 65 ♖a6+, ♖xf6 and ♔xd5; 64...♖b7 65 ♖a6+ ♔d7 66 ♔xd5) **65 ♖a6+ ♔d7 66 ♖b6!** (but not 66 ♔xd5? ♖c3) **1-0**

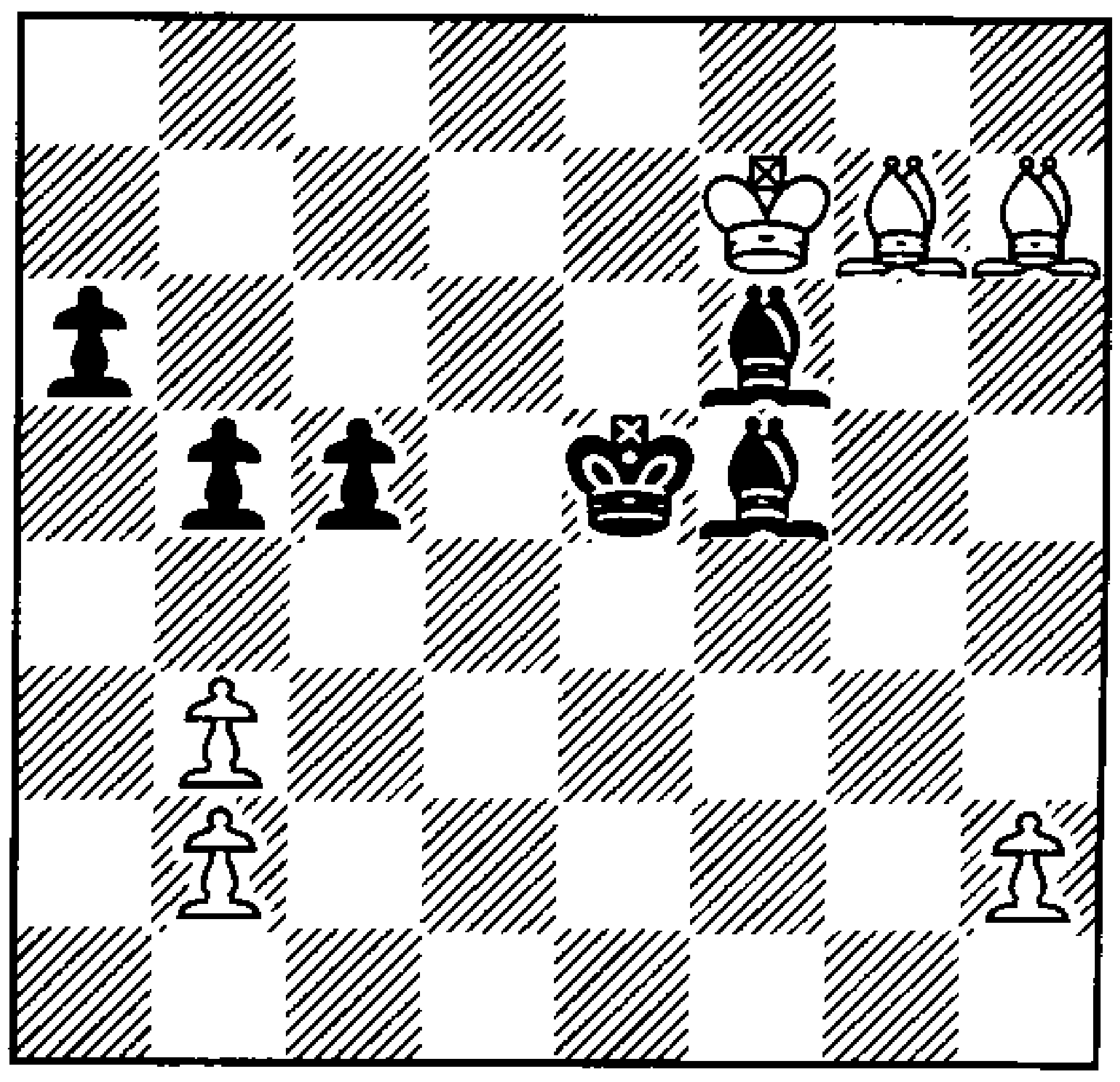
Black resigned due to 66...♖c3 67 ♖xb4 ♖f3 68 ♔e5 ♖f1 69 ♖f4.

Considerable difficulties in qualifying for the final stage of the tournament were also experienced by Lasker, when in the eighth round he lost surprisingly to Bernstein, and then only just escaped against his 'old friend' Tarrasch.

Game 67

Em.Lasker-S.Tarrasch

St Petersburg 1914, preliminary tournament



37...♗xg7?

The simple 37...♗e6+! 38 ♔f8 ♗xg7+ 39 ♔xg7 ♗xb3 would have won.

38 ♗xf5! ♔xf5?!

Had Black noticed his oversight, he would have replied 38...♗f6 or 38...♗h8. But apparently Tarrasch had decided to return an old debt – for Hastings 1895 (cf. *Game No.39*).

39 ♔xg7 a5 40 h4! ♔g4 41 ♔g6!

Excellent: it turns out that this pawn endgame is drawn! Black had only reckoned on 41 ♔f6? c4 42 bxc4 bxc4 43 ♔e5 c3 44 bxc3 a4 45 ♔d4 a3 winning.

41...♔xh4 42 ♔f5 (the king catches the passed a-pawn) **42...♔g3 43 ♔e4 ♔f2 44 ♔d5 ♔e3 45 ♔xc5 ♔d3 46 ♔xb5 ♔c2 47**

♔xa5 ♔xb3 ½-½

An ending that became a thematic predecessor of Réti's famous study (1921).

This was an important episode: this missed win at the finish of the preliminary stage dispirited Tarrasch, and in the final he was no longer the same player, while on the other hand, because of the system of counting, the half point saved by Lasker, as it later transpired, deprived Capablanca of at least a share of first place!

In the 'tournament of eleven' the Cuban was merciless: 1. Capablanca – 8 out of 10; 2-3. Lasker and Tarrasch – 6½; 4-5. Alekhine and Marshall – 6; 6-7. Bernstein and Rubinstein – 5 etc. It seemed that the destiny of first place was decided.... In the second round of the final tournament Lasker as Black gained a very difficult 100-move draw with Capablanca (with rook against bishop and knight with f-, g- and h-pawns), and then he began performing miracles. First he gained three wins in succession, reducing the deficit to a point.

Now much, if not everything, was decided by the duel of the leaders in the second cycle. This game with Capablanca is one of the most famous in Lasker's career. For the umpteenth time he demonstrated his true champion's character, when in an extreme situation he needed to mobilise himself fully and win 'to order', and, moreover against a very strong, hard-to-beat opponent (before this game Capa had not lost any games!).

Game 68

Em.Lasker-J.R.Capablanca

St Petersburg 1914, final tournament

Ruy Lopez C68

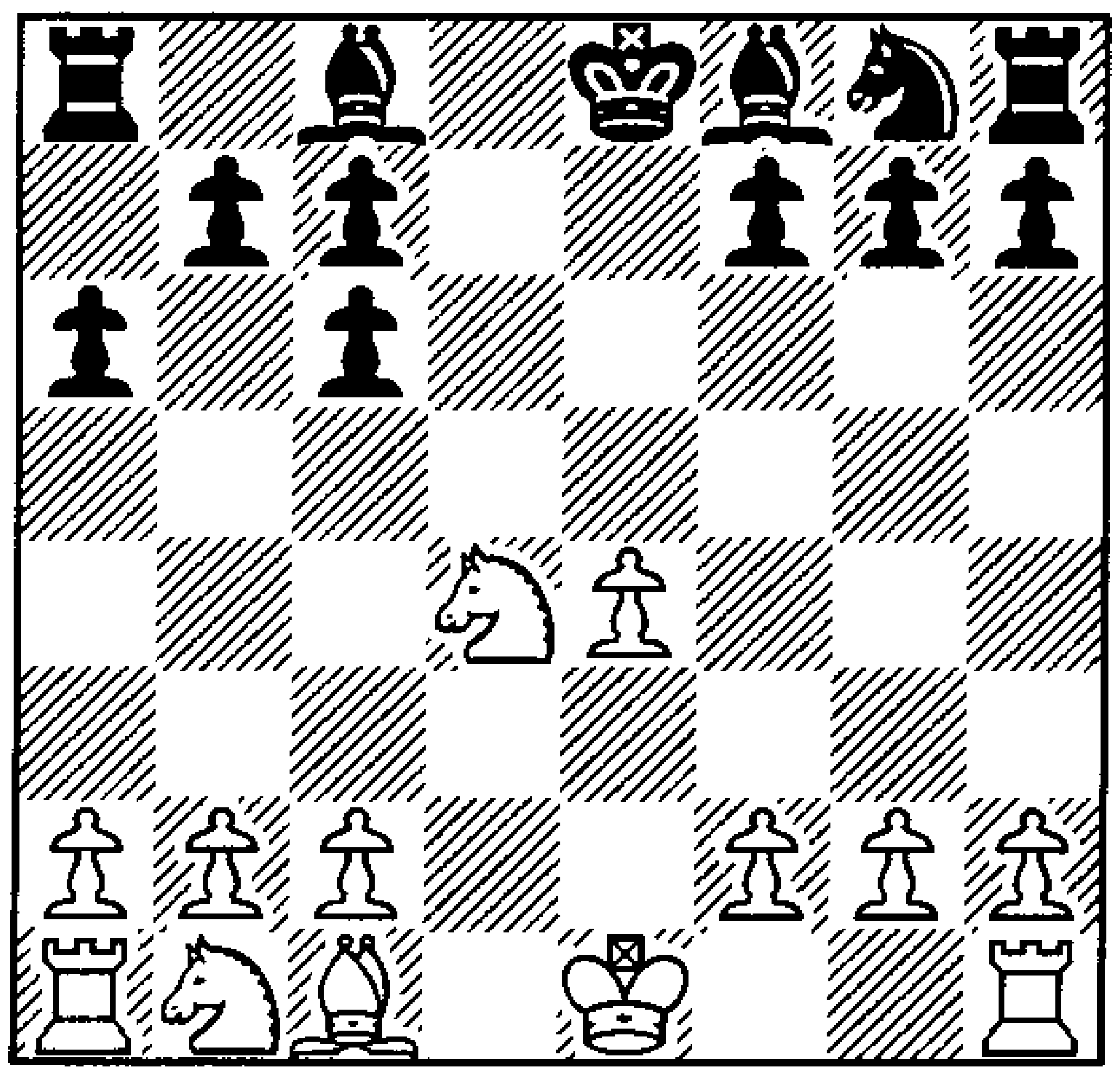
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗xc6!?

A surprising choice: although in Lasker's hands the Exchange Variation was a formidable weapon (he defeated Steinitz, Chigorin, Tarrasch, Janowski etc. with it), few could have thought that it would work against Capablanca, whose virtuoso endgame technique was already widely known. This especially could not have been imagined by José Raúl himself, with his charming youthful self-confidence – and hence also his underestimation of the opponent's plan.

4...dxc6 5 d4

Nowadays, following the example of Fischer, 5 0-0 is considered best, but at that time they more often played 5 ♘c3 f6 (5...♗c5?! – *Game No.84*) 6 d4 exd4 7 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 8 ♘xd4. It is amusing that this occurred in a game from the previous round, Alekhine-Lasker, and after 8...♗d6 9 ♗e3 ♘e7 10 0-0-0 0-0 11 ♘b3 ♘g6 12 ♗c5 ♗f4+ 13 ♔b1 ♖e8 14 ♖he1 (14 f3 b6 is equal) 14...b6 15 ♗e3 ♗e5 16 ♗d4 ♘h4 (dangerous is 16...♗xh2?! 17 g3 ♗g4 18 ♖c1! etc.) 17 ♖g1 ♗e6 18 f4 ♗d6 19 ♗f2 ♘g6 20 f5 ♗xb3 21 axb3 ♘f8 White finally lost due to a blunder on the 41st move.

6...exd4 6 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 7 ♘xd4



Is it really possible, after removing the queens from the board, to win a decisive game against Capablanca? After all, 'the defects of Black's pawn formation are more than compensated by his good development and the advantage of the two bishops.' (Zak) But, as it turns out, it is possible to win. True, for this you have to be a Lasker...

7...♗d6 (simpler is 7...♗d7! and ...0-0-0 with a very comfortable game) **8 ♘c3 ♘e7 9 0-0**

9 ♗e3 also promises little.

9...0-0 10 f4 ♖e8

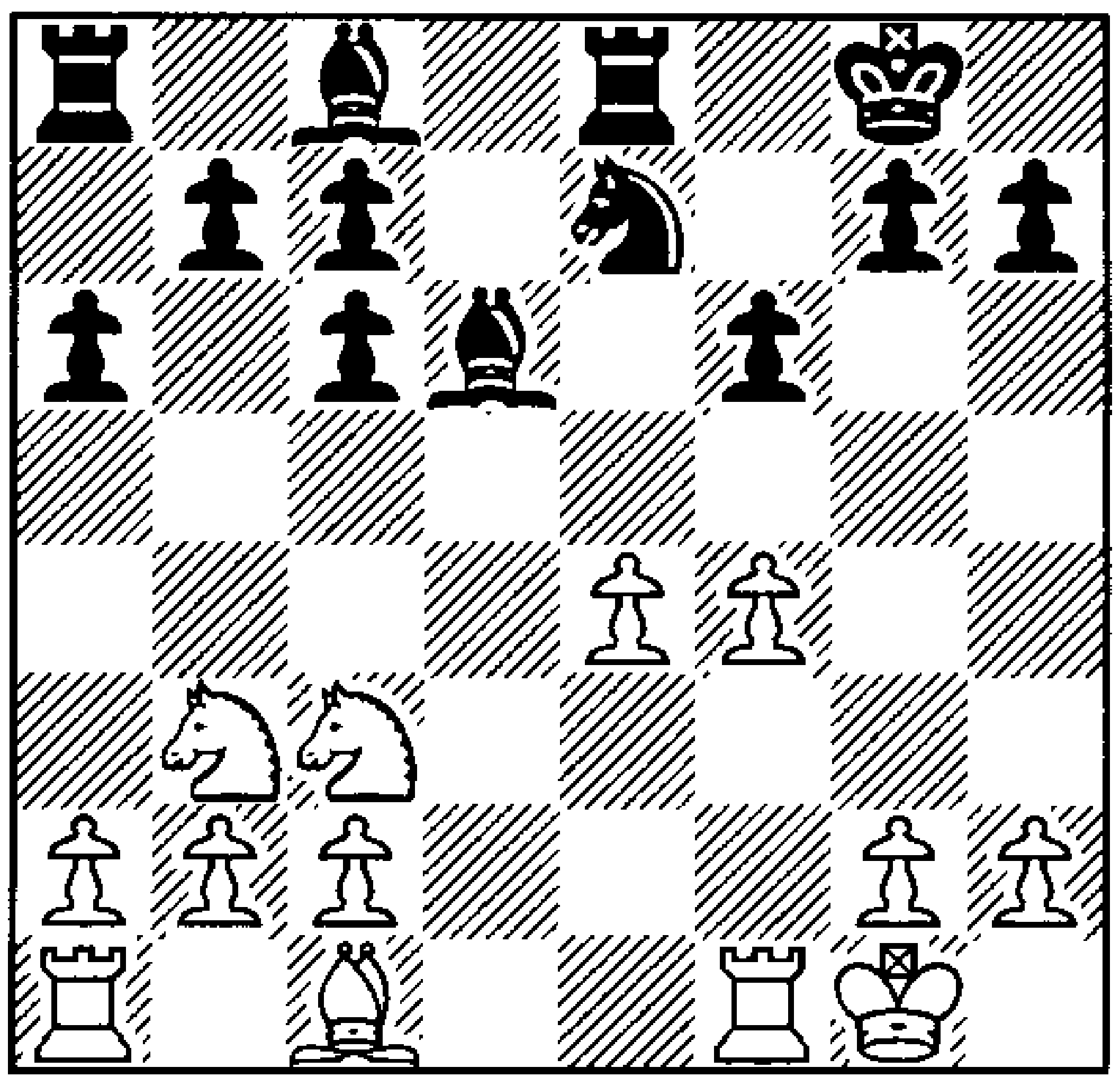
'Best. It threatens 11...♗c5 12 ♗e3 ♘d5. It also prevents 11 ♗e3 because of 11...♘d5 or 11...♘f5.' (Capablanca)

10...♗c5!? 11 ♗e3 ♖e8 is also possible, as well as Tarrasch's suggestion 10...f5!? 11 e5 ♗c5 12 ♗e3 ♗xd4 (but not 12...♘d5? 13 ♘xd5 ♗xd4? 14 ♘e7+ ♔f7 15 ♗xd4 ♔xe7 16 ♗c5+ or 13...cxd5 14 ♘xf5) 13 ♗xd4 b6 or 13...♘d5 with sufficient defensive resources, despite White's strong passed pawn.

The impression made by Lasker's original plan was so great, that the commentators tried to improve Black's play at the very start of the game! But Capablanca is correct in his assessment: Black does not have so many problems that he need be concerned about anything.

11 ♘b3 (pointless is 11 e5?! ♗c5 12 ♗e3 ♘d5 13 ♘xd5 cxd5) **11...f6**

'Preparatory to ...b7-b6 followed by ...c6-c5 and ...♗b7 in conjunction with ...♘g6, which would put White in great difficulties to meet the combined attack against the two centre pawns.' (Capablanca)



12 f5!

'It has been wrongly claimed that this wins the game, but I would like nothing better than to have such a position again.' (Capablanca) According to the classical laws of the Steinitz theory, this is indeed a dubious venture: White devalues his pawn majority on the kingside, giving himself a weak, backward pawn on e4, whereas Black is presented with a powerful outpost at e5. Aren't these rather too many defects for one move?! But Lasker's eagle eye is trained on the e6-square...

12...b6

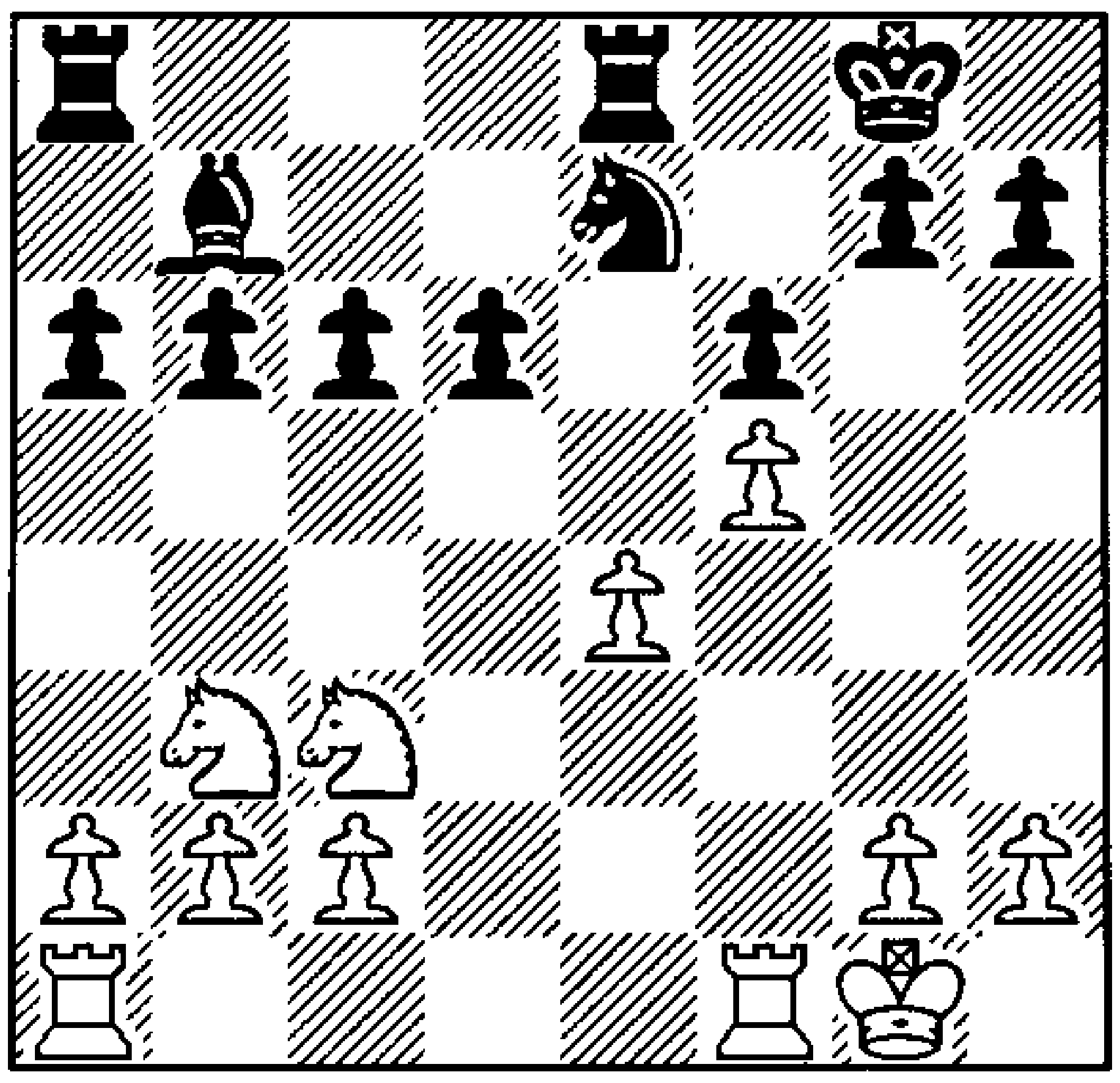
Tarrasch and Réti recommended 12...♗d7 13 ♗f4 ♗xf4 14 ♖xf4 ♖ad8 with the idea of ...♘c8-d6, but the bishop is more active on b7, from where it attacks the e4-pawn.

13 ♗f4 ♗b7?!

A fundamental mistake: in general it is advantageous for Black to undouble his pawns, but in the given instance the d6-pawn will become a chronic weakness.

Therefore more logical is 13...♗xf4! 14 ♖xf4 c5 15 ♖d1 ♗b7 16 ♖f2 (16 ♖d7 ♖ac8 and ...♗c6 or ...♘c6-e5) 16...♖ad8 (16...♖ac8!? and ...♘c6-e5 is equal – Nimzowitsch) 17 ♖xd8 (if 17 ♖fd2 ♖xd2 18 ♖xd2, both 18...♗c6 and ...♘c8-d6, and 18...♘c6 19 ♖d7 ♖c8 and ...♘e5! are good) 17...♖xd8 18 ♖d2 ♖xd2 19 ♘xd2 ♘c6!, and 'If White answers 20 ♘d5 then 20...♘d4 for Black will at least draw.' (Capablanca) This is also confirmed by the computer: 21 ♘xc7 ♘xc2 22 ♘c4 ♗xe4 23 ♘xb6 ♘b4 24 a3 ♘d3 25 ♘c4 (or 25 ♘xa6 ♗b7 26 ♘c7 ♘xb2) 25...♗xf5 26 ♘xa6 ♗e6 27 b3 ♔f8 with equality.

14 ♗xd6 cxd6



15 ♘d4

Capablanca admitted that he did not see this move when he played 13...♗b7.

15...♖ad8?!

Black still does not take his opponent's plan seriously and does not realise his mistake – and yet the knight at e6 will be like a bone in his throat! If he is going to allow it into his position, then better is 15...c5 16 ♘e6 ♖ac8 17 ♖ad1 ♖c6 18 ♘e2 (or 18 ♘d5 ♘xd5 19 exd5 ♖cc8) 18...♗c8 19 ♘2f4 g5! 20 ♘d5 ♔f7 with trench warfare.

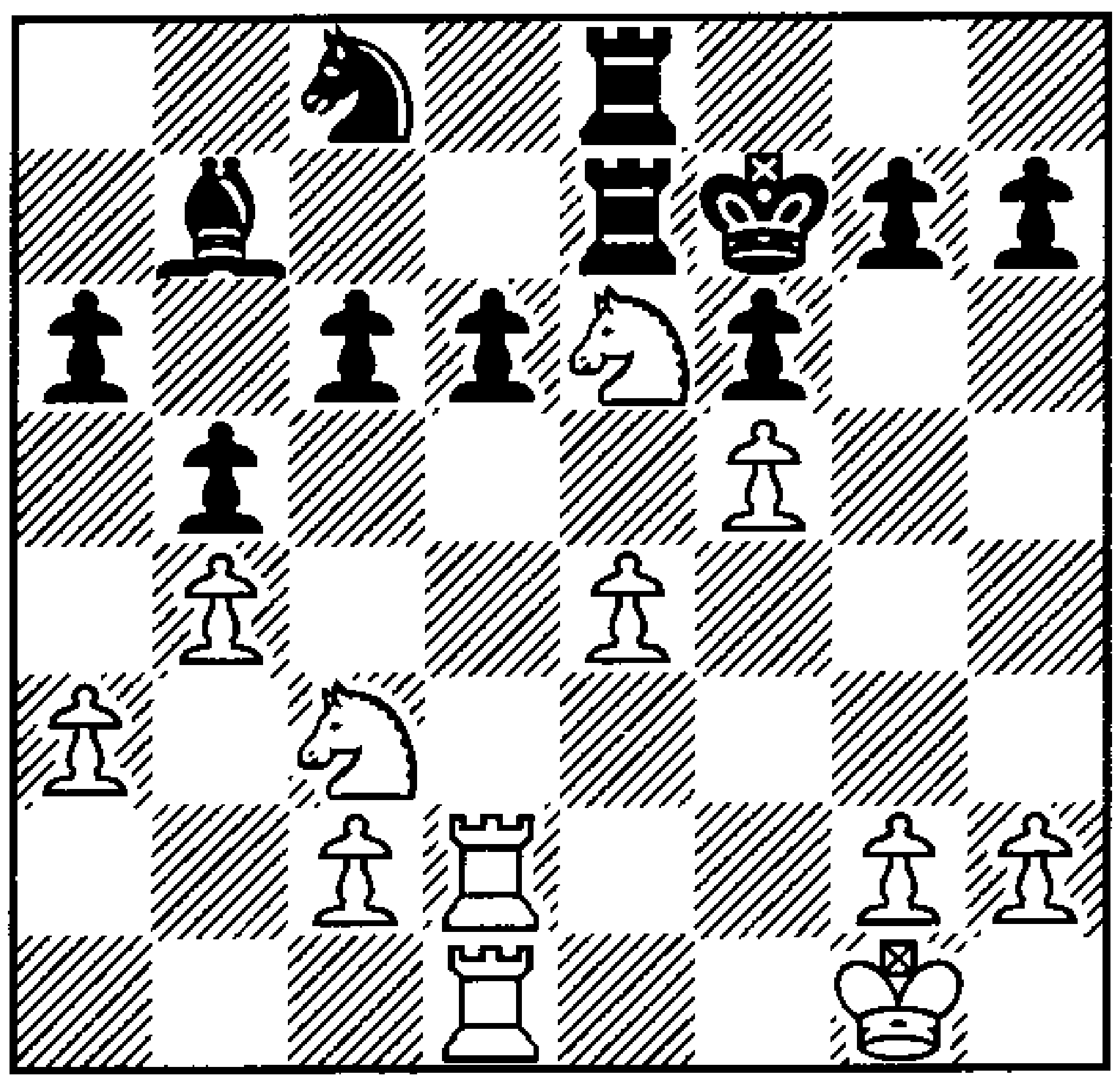
But the most radical way of fighting for equality was 15...♗c8! 16 ♖ad1 c5, for example: 17 ♘e6 ♗xe6 18 fxe6 ♖ad8 19 ♘d5 ♘c6! (but not 19...♘c8? 20 e7! ♖d7 21 ♖xf6! gxf6 22 ♘xf6+ ♔f7 23 ♘xd7 ♔xe7 24 ♘b8), or 17 ♘de2 d5! 18 ♘xd5 (18 exd5 ♘xf5) 18...♘xd5 19 ♖xd5 ♗b7 20 ♖d6 ♗xe4 21 ♖xb6 ♗xc2 with equal chances.

16 ♘e6 ♖d7 17 ♖ad1 ♘c8

'I was now on the point of playing ...c6-c5, to be followed by ...d6-d5, but suddenly I became ambitious...' (Capablanca) And indeed, after 17...c5 18 ♖f2 or 18 g4 there is 18...d5! But 18 ♘d5! is stronger – although after 18...♗xd5 19 exd5 b5, in the opinion of the third world champion, 'Black has nothing to fear. Black's plan in this case would be to work his knight around to e5, via c8, b6 and c4 or d7', White nevertheless retains the initiative: 20 g4 ♘c8 21 ♖f3 ♘b6 22 ♖g3 ♔h8 23 ♔h1 followed by h2-h4 and g4-g5.

18 ♖f2 b5 19 ♖fd2 ♖de7 20 b4 ♔f7 21 a3

White now has serious pressure.



21...♗a8?

'Once more changing my plan and this time without any good reason. Had I now played 21...♖xe6 22 fxe6 ♖xe6, as I intended to do when I went back with the knight to c8, I doubt very much if White would have been able to win the game. At least it would have been extremely difficult.' (Capablanca)

The exchange sacrifice would certainly have given better practical chances of saving the game, but the question mark is merited not so much by the bishop move itself, but rather Black's fatal idea of opening the a-file: effective use of it can be made only by a white rook...

22 ♔f2 ♖a7 23 g4! h6 24 ♖d3 a5? 25 h4 axb4 26 axb4 ♖ae7?!

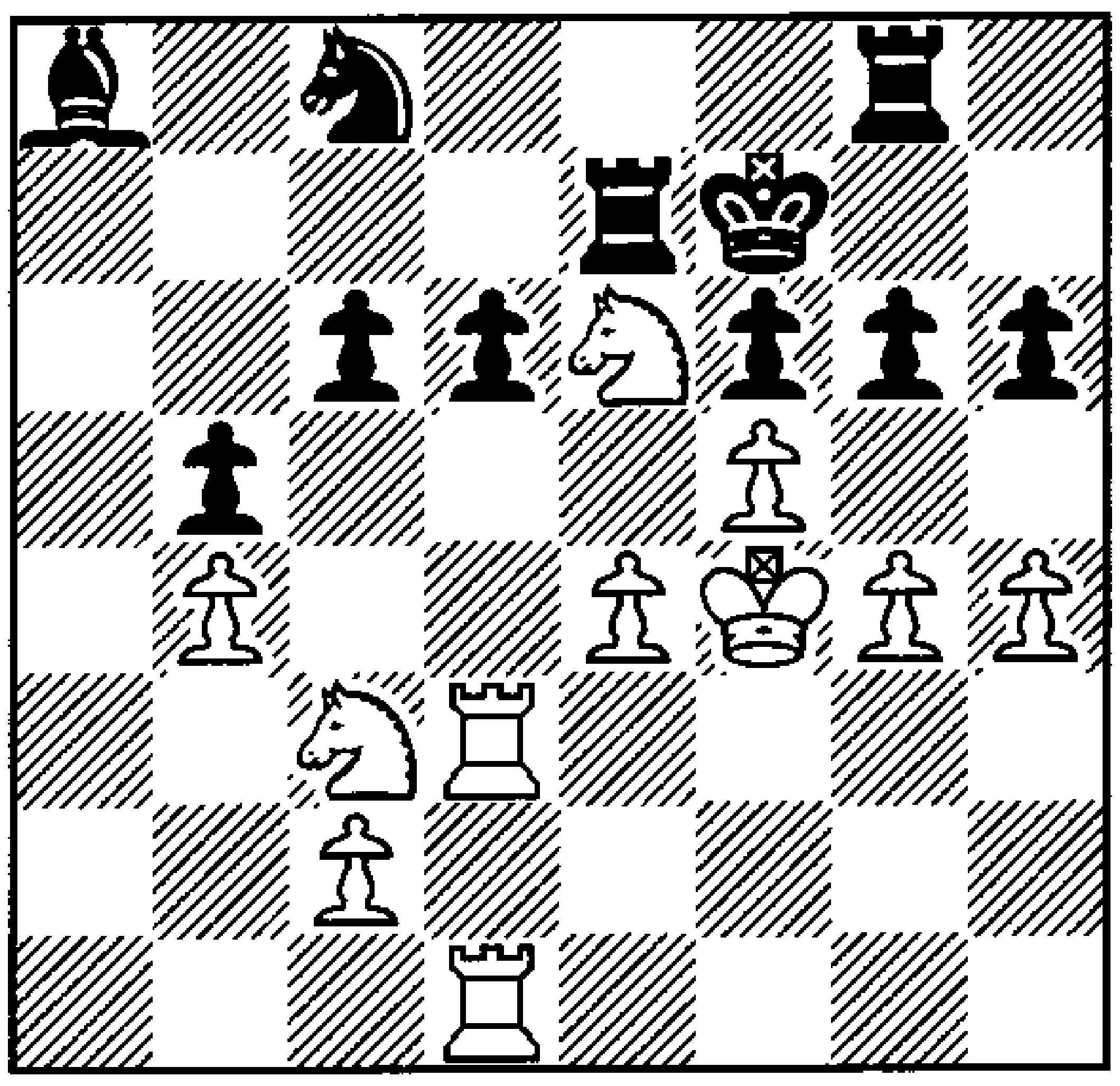
Although Black's position is difficult, he should not have moved his rook off the newly-opened a-file.

27 ♔f3 (the immediate 27 ♖g3! was more energetic) **27...♖g8 28 ♔f4**

Also a non-essential move before the time control.

28...g6?!

28...g5+ was more tenacious (Capablanca), when there would have followed 29 ♔f3 with a possible ♖h1, ♖dd1-a1, hxg5 etc.



29 ♖g3

'White's advantage is already so great, that the immediate breakthrough 29 g5!? hxg5+ 30 hxg5 would also have been decisive, for example: 30...gxf5 31 exf5 fxg5+ 32 ♘xg5+ ♔f8 33 ♘e6+ ♔f7 34 ♘e4, or 30...♖h8 31 gxf6 ♔xf6 32 ♖xd6! ♖h4+ (even worse is

32...♘xd6 33 e5+ ♔f7 34 exd6) 33 ♔g3 ♘xd6 34 ♔xh4 gxf5 35 ♖xd6 ♖xe6 36 ♖d8 fxe4 (the last chance; 36...♗b7 37 ♖f8+) 37 ♖xa8 e3 38 ♖a1!, and it only remains to overcome certain technical difficulties. 38...♔e5 39 ♘e2 ♔d5 40 ♖d1+ ♔c4? 41 ♖d4 mate would be an amusing finish.' (Zak)

29...g5+

Here it is already hard to offer any good advice. Some criticised Capablanca for this move, recommending 29...gxf5, but this too would not have helped in view of 30 exf5! d5 31 g5 ♘d6 (or 31...hxg5+ 32 hxg5 fxg5+ 33 ♘xg5+ ♔f8 34 f6 ♖a7 35 ♔e5!) 32 g6+ ♔e8 33 ♖a1, and the win for White is not far off.

30 ♔f3 ♘b6 (a desperate attempt to leap with the knight to c4 and e5) **31 hxg5!**

White is not distracted by 31 ♖xd6.

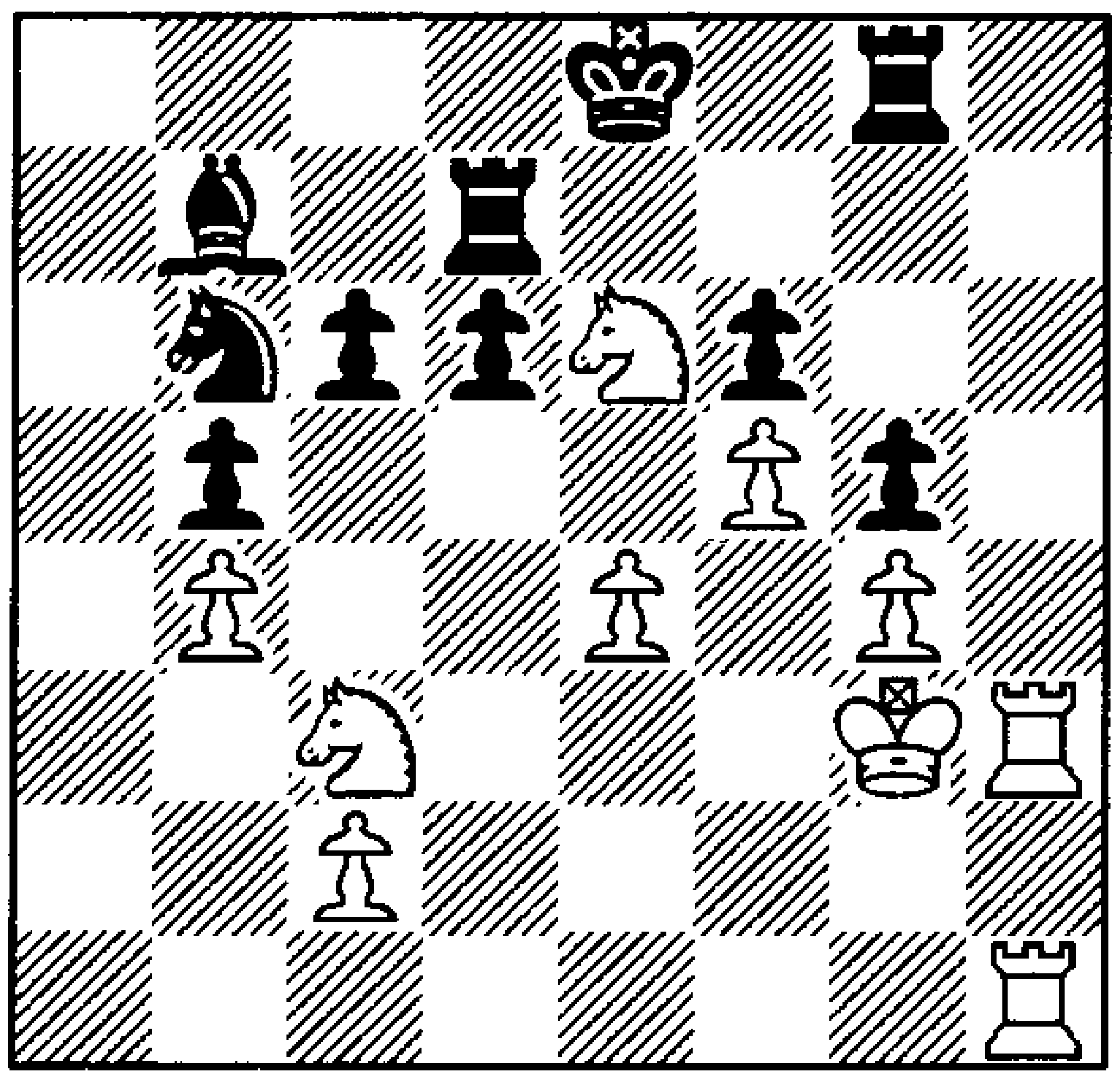
31...hxg5 32 ♖h3!

Lasker carries out his plan without any deviations. The 'greedy' 32 ♖xd6? would have given Black the desired respite: 32...♘c4 33 ♖d8 (33 ♖d1 ♖h8) 33...♖xd8 34 ♘xd8+ ♔e8 35 ♘e6 ♖h7!

32...♖d7

After 32...♘c4? the combined invasion of the white rooks on the a- and h-files is decisive: 33 ♖h7+ (33 ♖a1 is also possible) 33...♔e8 34 ♖a1! ♗b7 35 ♘c7+ ♔d7 36 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 37 ♖a7, and after the bishop moves – 38 ♘7d5+ and 39 ♘xf6 (Réti).

33 ♔g3! (the final preparations for the victorious breakthrough) **33...♔e8 34 ♖dh1 ♗b7**



35 e5!!

Over the course of 23 moves (after 12 f5) Black has been unable to neutralise this backward pawn!

35...dxe5 (or 35...fxe5 36 ♘e4) **36 ♘e4 ♘d5 37 ♘6c5!**

White would also have won easily by 37 ♖h8!? ♖xh8 38 ♖xh8+ ♔f7 39 ♘4c5 ♖e7? 40 ♖f8 mate.

37...♗c8 (37...♖c7 38 ♘d6+) **38 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 39 ♖h7 ♖f8 40 ♖a1!**

Black pays dearly for this mistake on the 24th move.

40...♔d8 41 ♖a8+ ♗c8 42 ♘c5 1-0

'Capablanca was dejected. Normally dignified, calm and smiling, on this occasion, for two or three minutes after resigning, he sat at the board with his head in his hands.' (Romanovsky)

The psychological effect of this brilliant win was enormous. Even seven years later in their match for the world crown, in reply to 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 Capa did not once play 3...a6! against Lasker. And in St Petersburg he was so shocked, that the following day he 'collapsed' with White in his game with Tarrasch and as a result finished half a point behind Lasker.

However, in order to take clear first place, the champion still had to win 'to order' in his final game. His bold combination against Marshall has provoked numerous debates.

Game 69
Em.Lasker-F.Marshall
St Petersburg 1914, final tournament
Petroff Defence C42

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘xe5 d6 4 ♘f3 ♘xe4 5 ♕e2

This is what Lasker began playing after his painful defeat at the hands of Pillsbury in St Petersburg 1895/96 (*Game No.40*).

5...♕e7 6 d3 ♘f6 7 ♗g5

Or 7 ♘c3 ♕xe2+ 8 ♗xe2 g6 (8...♗e7;

8...c6 and ...♘a6) 9 ♘d4 a6 (9...♗g7 10 ♘db5) 10 h3 (10 ♗g5!?) 10...♗g7 11 g4 ♗d7! 12 ♗f3 ♘c6 with an equal position (Shirov-Kramnik, Cazorla 8th matchgame 1998).

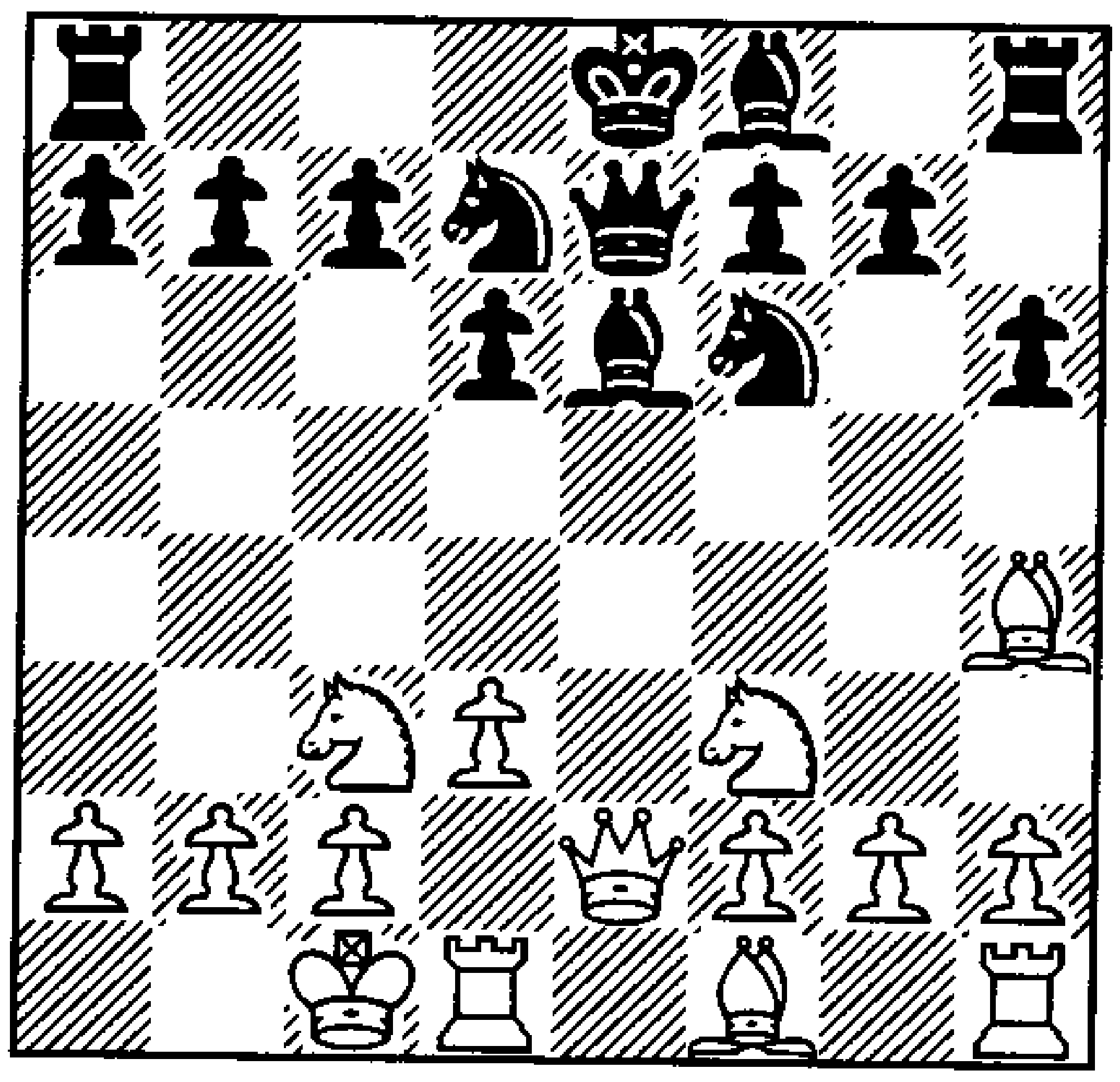
7...♗e6

Marshall's favourite move. In the second half of the 20th century they began to prefer 7...♘bd7 8 ♘c3 ♕xe2+ 9 ♗xe2 h6 (Bronstein), and then 7...♕xe2+ 8 ♗xe2 ♗e7 9 ♘c3 c6! (but not 9...♗d7 10 0-0-0 Lasker-Teichmann, Cambridge Springs 1904) 10 0-0-0 ♘a6, as in the 13th and 15th games of the Spassky-Petrosian match (Moscow 1969).

8 ♘c3 ♘bd7

After 8...♘c6?!, apart from 9 0-0-0 0-0-0 10 d4 d5 11 ♘e5 with some advantage (Lasker-Pillsbury, St Petersburg 1895/96), it is possible simply to spoil the black pawns – 9 ♘e4!? d5 10 ♘xf6+ gxf6 11 ♗e3 0-0-0 12 d4 etc. And if 8...h6 it makes sense to play 9 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 10 d4 – a variation, known from the games Morphy-Löwenthal (New Orleans 1850), Capablanca-Marshall (St Petersburg 1914) and Mieses-Marshall (Baden-Baden 1925).

9 0-0-0 h6 10 ♗h4



10...g5

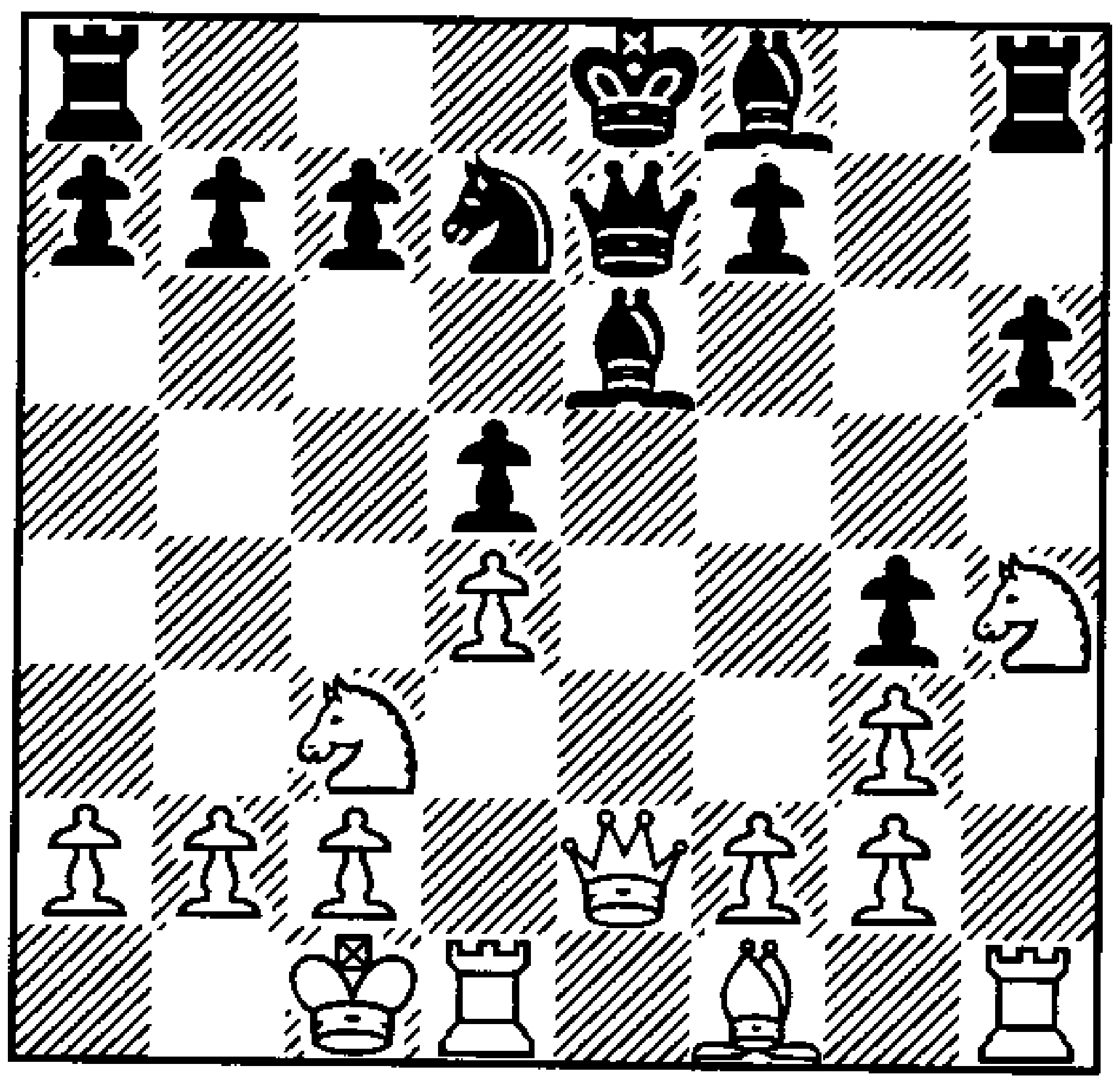
Or 10...0-0-0!? 11 d4 ♘b6 12 ♕b5 a6 13 ♕a5 with a slight advantage to White.

11 ♗g3 ♘h5 (dangerous is 11...♗g7 12 ♘d4 0-0?! 13 h4!) **12 d4 ♘xg3** (12...0-0-0!?) **13 hxg3 g4?!**

13...0–0–0 is better, but Tarrasch's recommendation of 13...♘b6 14 d5 ♗g4? is strongly met by 15 ♕b5+! ♗d7 (15...♕d7 16 ♖e1+) 16 ♕a5.

14 ♘h4 d5

Alas, 14...0-0-0? is not possible because of 15 d5.



For complete happiness Black is short of just one tempo: had he already castled queenside, his two bishops could have caused White considerable problems, especially with the crippled knight on h4. Fully aware of this, the world champion launches an offensive.

15 ♕b5!

'A move, with which Lasker wins not only the game, but also the tournament in St Petersburg.' (Tarrasch) Much less was promised by 15 ♘b5 ♔d8 16 ♕d2 a6 17 ♘c3 ♗g7.

15...0-0-0

A cunning trap very much in Marshall's style! However, 15...♕b4? 16 ♘xd5! was clearly bad, and 15...♗g7?! 16 ♕xb7 0-0 17 ♘xd5 was extremely dubious.

16 ♕a5! (after 16 ♘xd5? ♗xd5 17 ♕xd5 ♕g5+ 18 ♕xg5 hxg5 White would have lost his wretched knight) **16...a6**

But not 16...♔b8? 17 ♘b5.

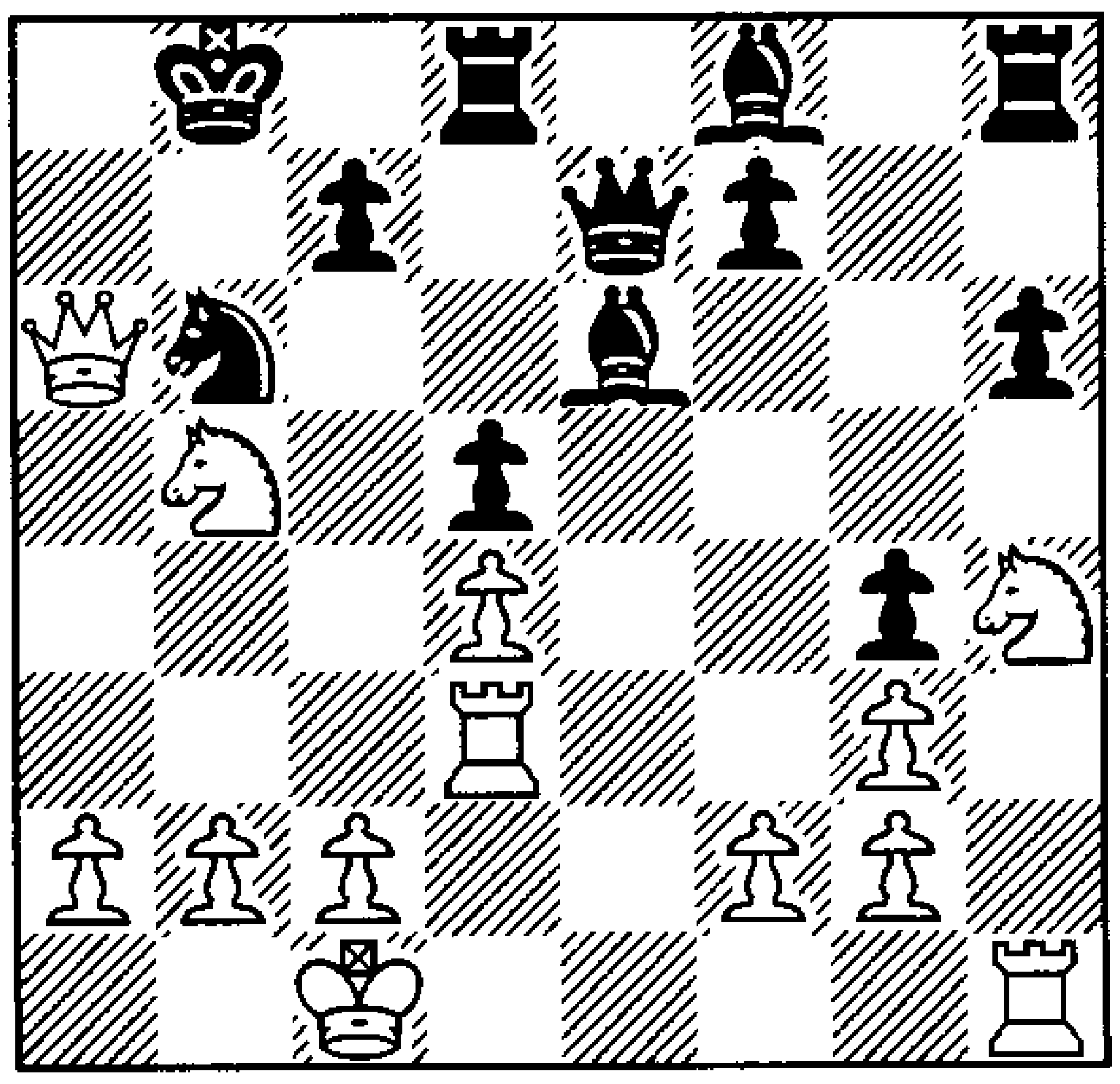
17 ♗xa6! bxa6?!

Not at all to Marshall's liking was the depressing endgame a pawn down after 17...♕b4!? 18 ♕xb4 ♗xb4 19 ♗d3 ♗xc3 20 bxc3, although this was probably the best saving chance.

18 ♕xa6+ ♔b8 19 ♘b5 ♘b6 (19...♘f6? 20

♖d3 wins) **20 ♖d3**

The critical position for assessing the correctness of Lasker's combination.



20...♕g5+

Several commentators considered this to be the decisive mistake, and suggested instead the immediate 20...♘c4, so as not to allow the rook to go to b3: 21 ♖b3 ♕g5+ 22 ♔b1 ♘d2+ and ...♘xb3+.

And if 21 ♖e1, then 21...♖d6 22 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 23 ♖b3+ (23 ♕b5+ ♕b6) 23...♘b6 24 a4 ♗c8 25 ♖e8 ♕d7 with drawing chances (although here, in my opinion, 22 ♕a7+ ♔c8 23 ♘f5! is more promising, e.g. 23...♕g5+ 24 ♔b1 ♖c6 25 ♕a8+ ♔d7 26 ♘a7).

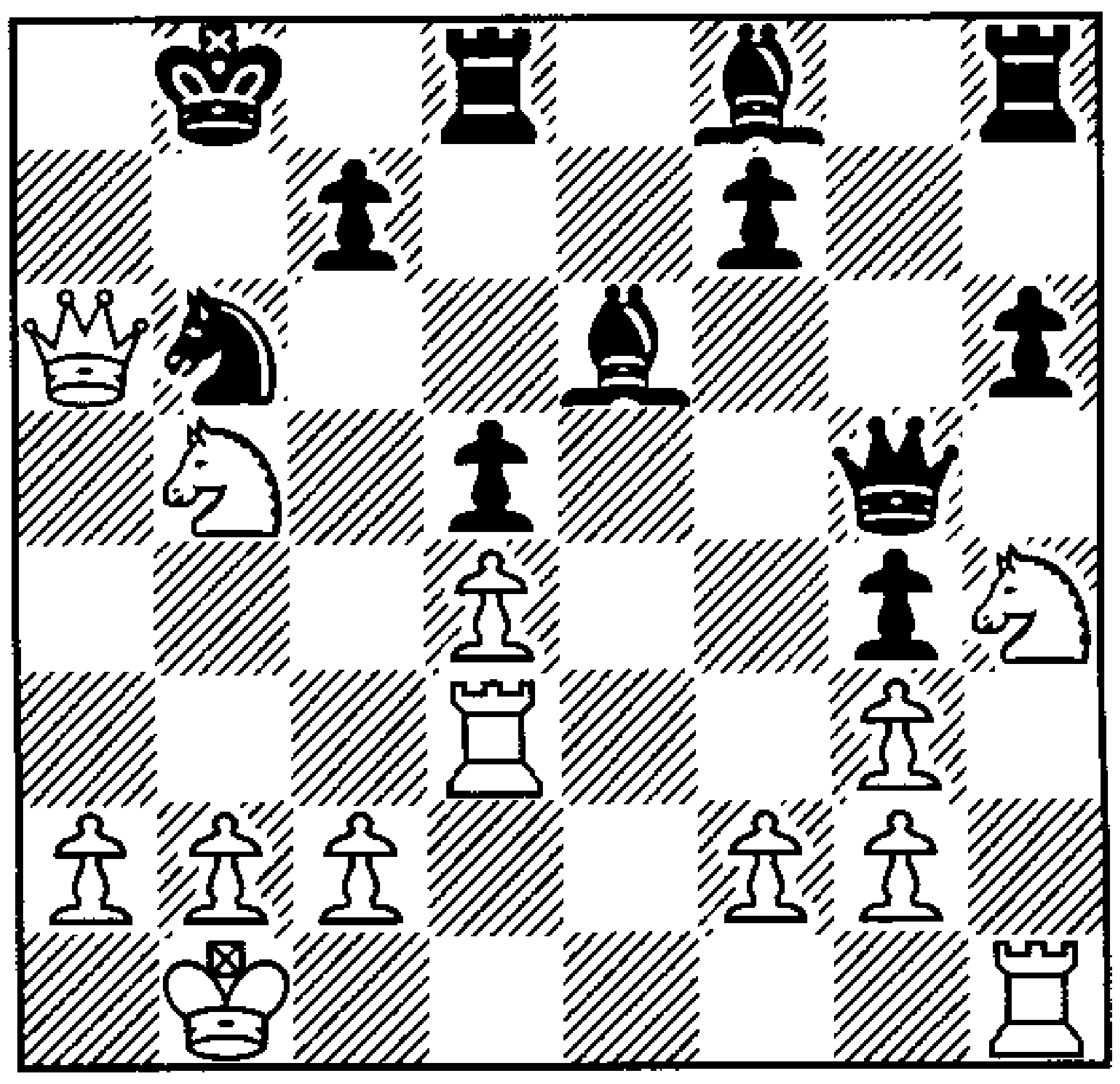
However, a more careful study of the position, even without the help of a computer, reveals that 20...♘c4 also does not refute the champion's idea. After 21 ♖b3! (nevertheless!) 21...♕g5+ White has two tempting continuations:

1) 22 f4!? gxf3+ 23 ♔b1 ♘d2+ 24 ♔a1 ♘xb3+ 25 cxb3 ♕xg3 26 ♘xf3 ♗d6 27 ♖c1 ♗f4 28 ♘e5! ♗xe5 29 ♕a7+! (29 dxe5? ♕e3) 29...♔c8 30 dxe5 ♔d7 31 ♘xc7! ♕h4 32 ♘xd5+ ♔e8 33 ♘c7+ ♔d7 (33...♔f8 34 ♘xe6+ fxe6 35 ♖f1+ and mate) 34 ♕c5! with decisive threats;

2) 22 ♔b1 ♘d2+ 23 ♔a1 ♘xb3+ 24 cxb3 ♗d6 25 ♕a7+ ♔c8 26 ♘xd6+ ♖xd6 (if 26...cxd6, then 27 f4! gxf3 28 ♘xf3 ♕e3 29 ♖e1!) 27 ♕a8+ ♔d7 28 ♕xh8 with an obvious advantage (28...♖c6 29 a3 ♖c2 30 f4 gxf3 31 ♘xf3 ♕xg3 32 ♕f8 wins).

Therefore the correctness of Lasker's famous combination remains above suspicion. Marshall probably avoided 20...Nc4 because he intuitively sensed the danger of this move.

21 ♔b1



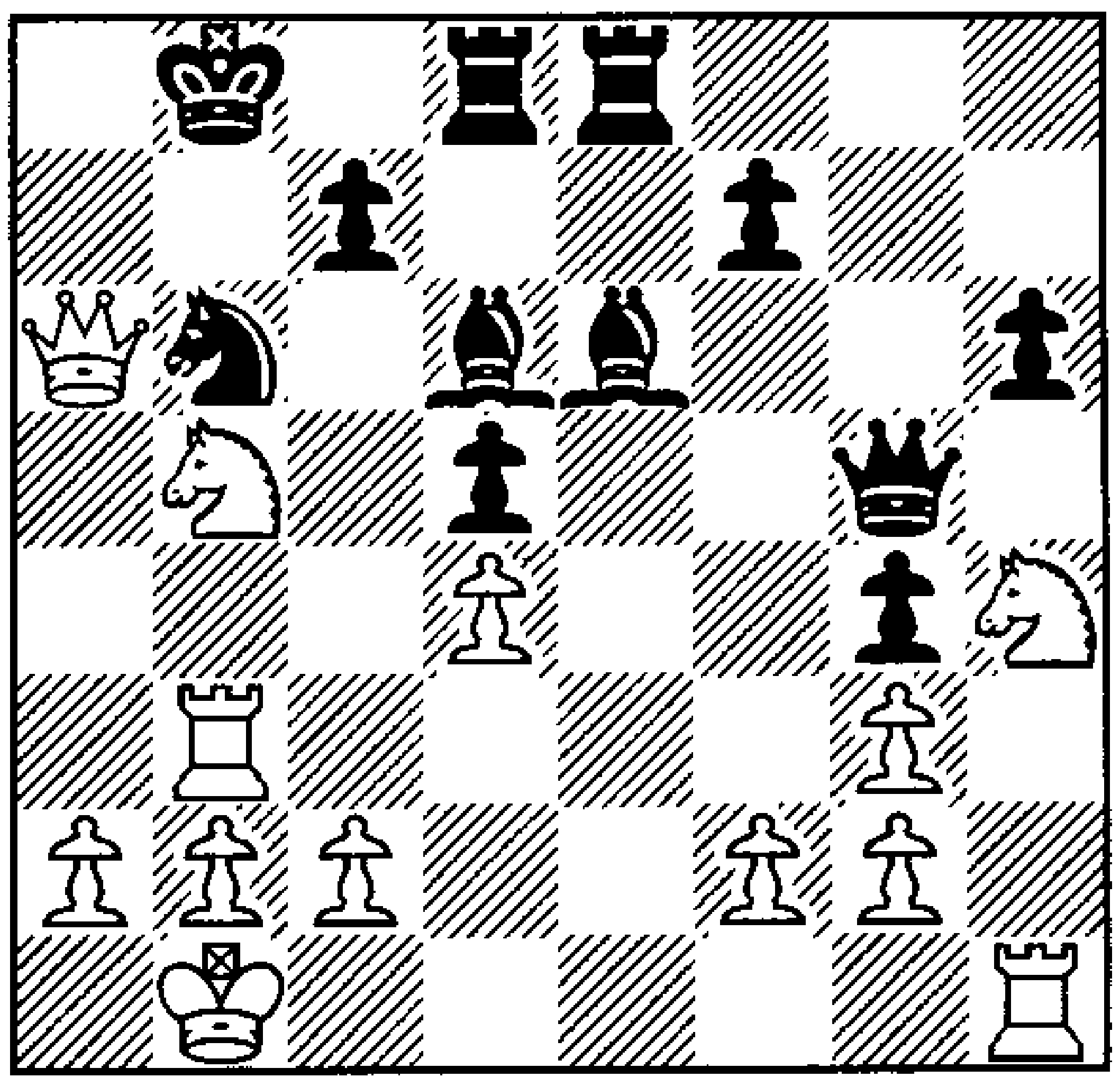
21...♗d6

Also after 21...♕e7 22 ♕a7+ (22 ♖b3!? ♖d6 23 a4) 22...♔c8 23 ♖c3 ♘c4 24 ♘f5! ♗xf5 25 ♕a8+ ♔d7 26 ♕xd5+ ♔e8 (26...♔c8?! 27 ♘a7+ ♔b8 28 ♘c6+) 27 ♕xf5 or 27 ♕c6+ ♕d7 (27...♖d7 28 ♘xc7+ ♔d8 29 ♕a8+ and ♖xc4+) 28 ♘xc7+ ♔e7 29 ♖e1+ ♗e6 30 ♕xc4 White has an irresistible attack.

22 ♖b3

White could also have considered 22 ♖c3!? ♘c4 (22...♘c8 23 ♘a7!) 23 ♕a7+ ♔c8 24 ♘xd6+ ♖xd6 (24...cxd6 25 ♔a1!! and ♖b3) 25 ♕a8+ ♔d7 26 ♕xh8 ♖b6 27 f4 winning.

22...♖he8



If 22...♕e7 or 22...♕f6, then again 23 a4!

23 a4!

Much stronger than 23 ♖c3 ♘c4 24 ♘xd6 ♖xd6 (24...cxd6?? 25 ♖b3+ ♔c7 26 ♕b7 mate) 25 ♕b5+ ♖b6 26 ♕xe8+ ♔b7 27 f4 gxf3 28 ♘xf3 ♕xg3 with an unclear game.

23...♗f5 24 ♘a7! (24 a5!? ♗xc2+ 25 ♔xc2 ♖e2+ 26 ♔b1 was also decisive) **24...♗d7 25 a5 ♕d2 26 axb6 ♖e1+ 27 ♔a2**

Or 27 ♖xe1 ♕xe1+ 28 ♔a2.

27...c6 28 ♘b5 cxb5 29 ♕a7+ 1-0

29...♔c8 30 ♕a8+ ♗b8 31 ♕a6 mate. A crushing win!

And so, by demonstrating his outstanding fighting qualities and scoring 7 out of 8 in the final(!), the current champion finished ahead of two future chess kings and two former challengers (1. Lasker – 13½ out of 18; Capablanca – 13; 3. Alekhine – 10; 4. Tarrasch – 8½; 5. Marshall – 8). And he showed that, as a couple of decades earlier, he still had no equals in the world!

An invaluable reward for this victory was the acknowledgement of Dr Tarrasch: 'Lasker again produced a wonderful game (*the game in question is the one with Marshall from the first cycle – G. K.*). He played 'not according to the rules', in 'ultra-modern' style, sharply for a win. Lasker took a serious risk! He was in a difficult position. But that is his style. His opponents play objectively correctly and obtain good positions, but, strangely enough, Lasker never loses. No one has the right to reproach him for his skill in playing in this style. We must merely again and again be surprised by him... For participating in the tournament Lasker received an enormous fee – 4,000 roubles. *I do not find this too high.* Who else could play like this! Patrons do not give their money lightly, and if in future Lasker will play like this, he deserves much greater fees.'

Chess Longevity

Before the start of St Petersburg 1914 Lasker announced in the press that in the autumn he would play 'with the brilliant Russian master Rubinstein a match of 20 games for the world championship.' And at the same time he 'curtailed' another challenger: 'Can the esteemed title of genius be conferred on Capablanca? In my opinion, no.' But after the tournament the Cuban's stock, naturally, rose sharply. Alas, all plans were ruined by the First World War.

Of the rare events of that time I should mention the 'friendly' match that Lasker played with the markedly weaker Tarrasch (Berlin 1916: +5 -0 =1) and the double-cycle match-tournament of four stars, also in Berlin (1918): 1. Lasker – 4½ out of 6; 2. Rubinstein – 4 (both undefeated); 3. Schlechter – 2; 4. Tarrasch – 1½. Two and a half months later Schlechter died prematurely...

Negotiations with Capablanca were resumed only in 1920. After the difficult war years Lasker felt unprepared for a match with his flourishing opponent, but, having lost, due to inflation, all of his savings, he could not reject the generous offer of the Havana Chess Club – $11,000, an unheard of sum for those times! The result of this match (Havana 1921) is well known: Capablanca won ahead of schedule by the score +4 =10 and became the third world champion in history. However, the battle between the two chess greats did not end there.

Lasker's first appearance after the Havana match created a genuine furore – the ex-champion brilliantly won a strong international tournament in Mährisch-Ostrau (1923), ahead of both his former rivals and the young generation of top-class masters: 1. Lasker – 10½ out of 13 (undefeated); 2. Réti – 9½; 3. Grünfeld – 8½; 4. Selesnieff – 7½; 5-6. Tartakower and Euwe – 7; 7-8. Bogoljubow and Tarrasch – 6½; 9. Spielmann – 6; 10. Rubinstein – 5½ etc.

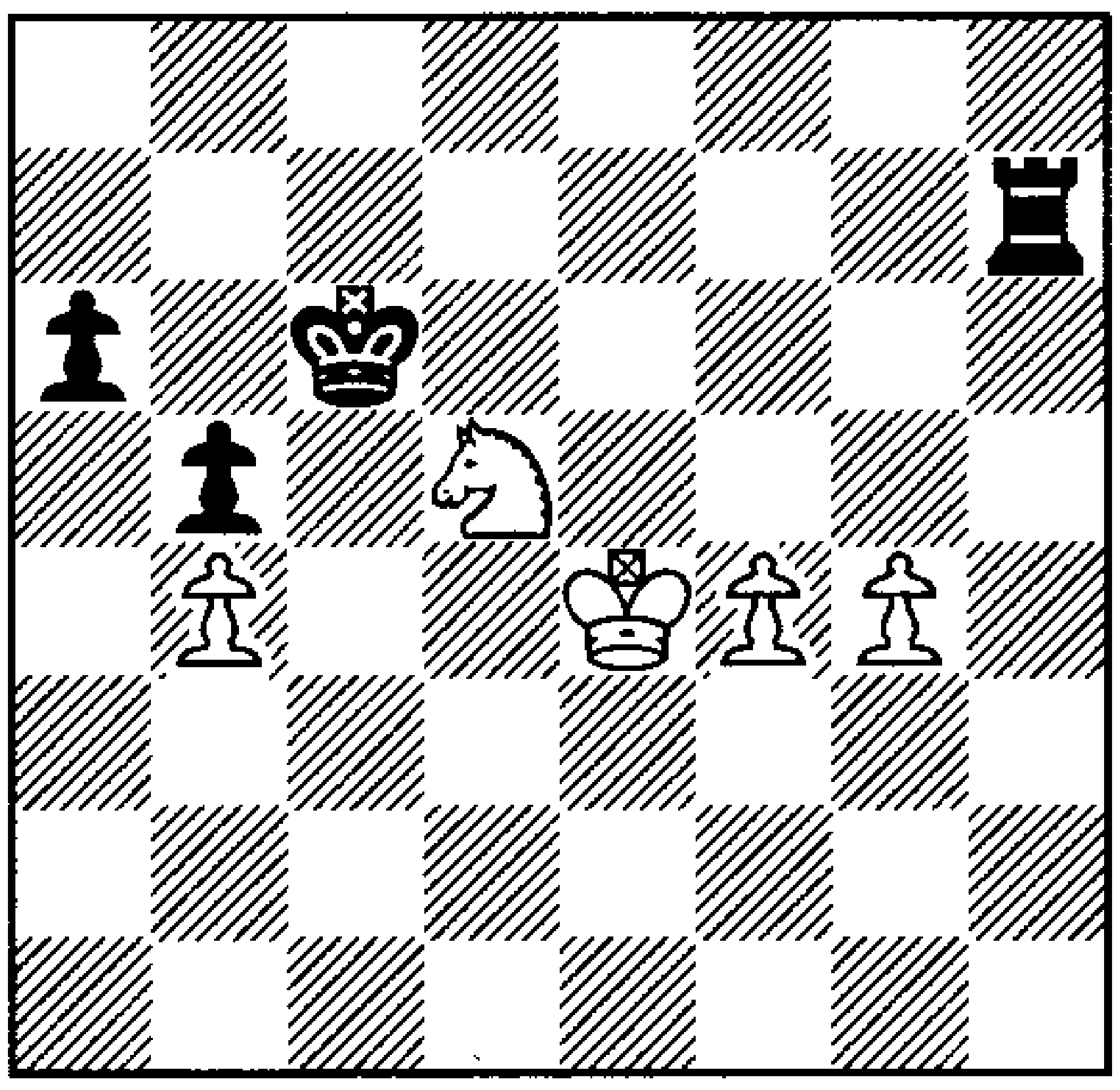
Then in the double-cycle super-tournament in New York (1924) the 55-year-old former king performed yet another miracle, by finishing ahead of the entire elite, including both the current and the future world champions: 1. Lasker – 16 out of 20(!);

2. Capablanca – 14½; 3. Alekhine – 12; 4. Marshall – 11; 5. Réti – 10½; 6. Maróczy – 10; 7. Bogoljubow – 9½; 8. Tartakower – 8 etc. Moreover, he fought like a lion in every game!

Game 70

Em.Lasker-Ed.Lasker

New York 1924, 6th round



72...♖h8?!

'This plausible move grants White a hidden possibility for a draw. Correct would have been 72...♖d7, which could have forced the retreat of the knight without taking the rook from the seventh row; for instance: 73 ♘e3 a5 74 bxa5 b4 75 g5 (75 a6 b3 is pointless) 75...♔c5 76 ♘c2 b3 77 ♘a3 b2 78 g6 ♔b4 79 ♘b1 (79 ♘c2+ ♔b3) 79...♖d1 80 g7 ♖g1 followed by ...♖xg7 winning, or 73 ♘f6 ♖d8 74 g5 a5 75 bxa5 b4 76 g6 b3, and wins.' (Alekhine)

Later instead of 76 g6? the 'saving' 76 ♘g4 b3 77 ♘e5+ ♔b5 78 ♘d3 ♖e8+ 79 ♔d4 ♔xa5 was recommended, but stronger is 78...♔c4! 79 ♘b2+ ♔c3 80 ♘a4+ ♔b4 81 ♘b2 ♖d2 and wins.

73 ♘e3 (inferior is 73 ♘f6?! ♖d8 74 g5 a5!) **73...♖e8+ 74 ♔d4 ♖d8+ 75 ♔e4!**

If 75 ♔c3, then 75...♖d6! is unpleasant.

75...a5!

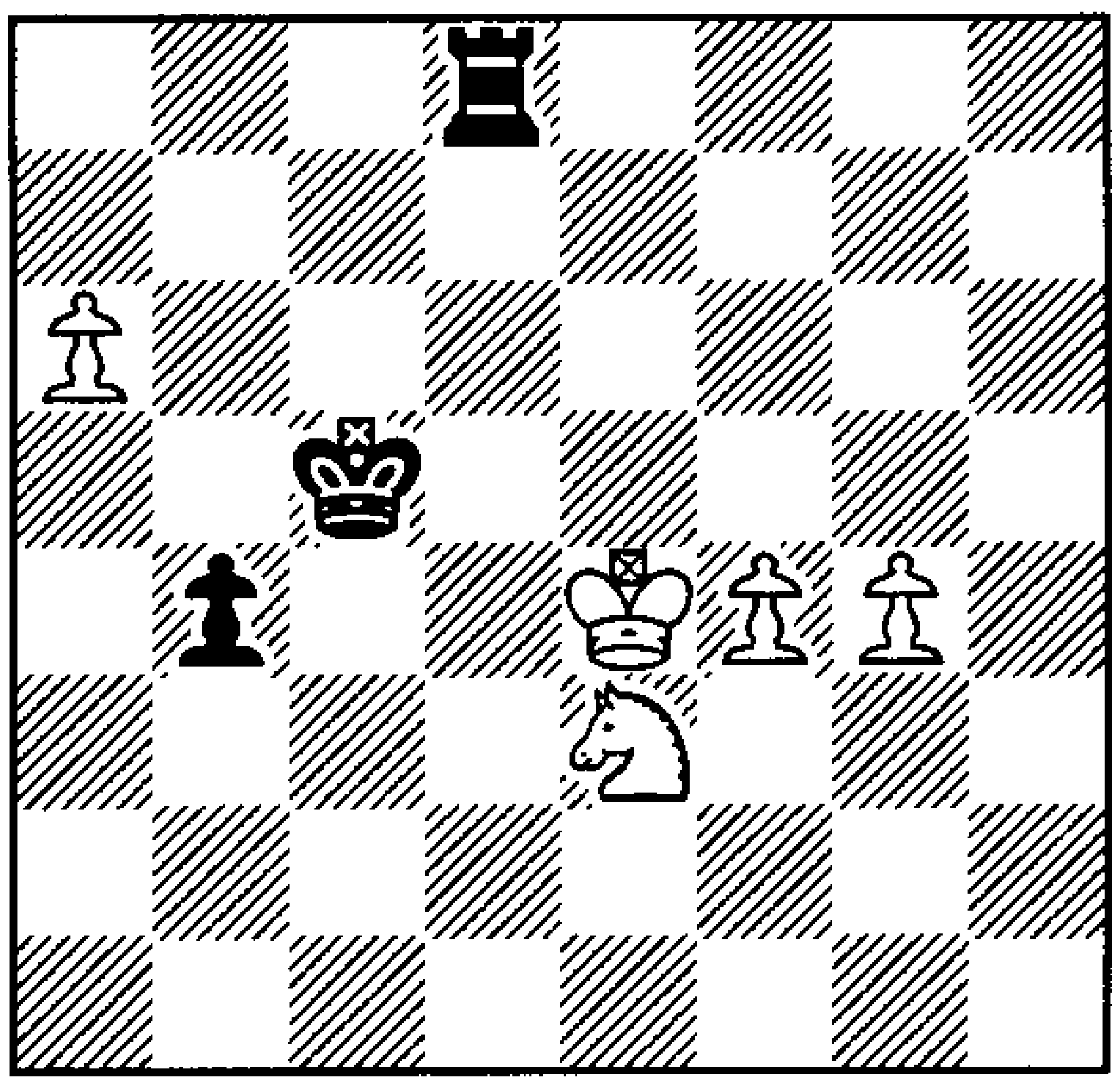
Black's last winning chance is to create his own passed pawn.

76 bxa5 b4 77 a6!

'The only move. Obviously insufficient, for instance, would have been 77 g5 b3 78 ♘c4 ♔c5 79 ♘b2 ♖d2 80 ♘d3+ ♔c4 81 ♘e5+ ♔c3, and wins. (Alekhine) And the recommendation 77 ♘c4 b3 78 ♔e3 ♔b5 79 ♘b2 would have been no good at all on account of 79...♔xa5 80 g5 ♔b4 81 g6 ♔c3 82 ♘a4+ ♔c2 83 f5 ♖e8+ 84 ♔d4 ♖a8.

77...♔c5!

Inferior was 77...b3?! 78 ♘c4 ♔b5 79 ♘b2 ♔xa6 (79...♖d2 80 a7) 80 ♔e3 ♔b5 81 g5 ♔b4 82 g6 ♔c3 (or 82...♔a3 83 ♘c4+) 83 ♘a4+ with a draw, since 83...♔c2? fails to 84 f5 b2 85 ♘xb2 ♔xb2 86 g7 and White wins.



78 a7! b3

Alekhine considered this sharp position to be drawn, but for the moment no clear draw for White is apparent! Also good was 78...♖a8!? 79 f5 ♖xa7 80 ♘d1 ♖e7+ 81 ♔f3 ♖f7 82 ♘b2 ♔d5 83 ♔f4 b3 etc.

79 ♘d1 ♖a8! (79...♔b6 80 ♔e3 ♔xa7 81 ♘b2 is equal) **80 g5**

White loses after 80 f5?! ♖xa7 81 f6 ♔d6 82 ♔f5 ♖a1 83 ♘b2 ♖f1+ 84 ♔g6 ♖f2 85 ♘d3 b2 86 ♘xb2 ♖xb2.

80...♖xa7 81 g6 ♖d7

Many commentators, following Alekhine, ignore this moment, but the computer suggests that after 81...♔d6! 82 ♔f5 ♔e7 83 ♔g5 ♖a2 things are bad for White.

82 ♘b2 ♖d2 (82...♔d6!? 83 f5 ♖c7 84 ♔f4 ♖c2 is also tempting) **83 ♔f3! ♖d8**

Of course, not 83...♖xb2? 84 g7.

84 ♔e4

Possibly better was 84 f5!? ♔d6 85 ♔f4 ♖c8 86 ♘d1, although after 86...♖c4+ 87 ♔g5 ♖c1 88 ♘b2 ♖c2 89 ♘d1 ♔e5 there is still no obvious draw.

84...♖d2?!

It would appear to be only here, and not on the 72nd move, that Black misses a win: 84...♔b4 85 f5 ♔c3 86 ♘a4+ ♔c2 87 f6 ♖a8.

85 ♔f3 ♖d8 86 ♔e4 ♔d6 (forcing the win of both passed pawns, but... not the game!) **87 ♔d4!**

Dangerous is 87 f5?! ♖c8 88 ♘d3 ♖c4+.

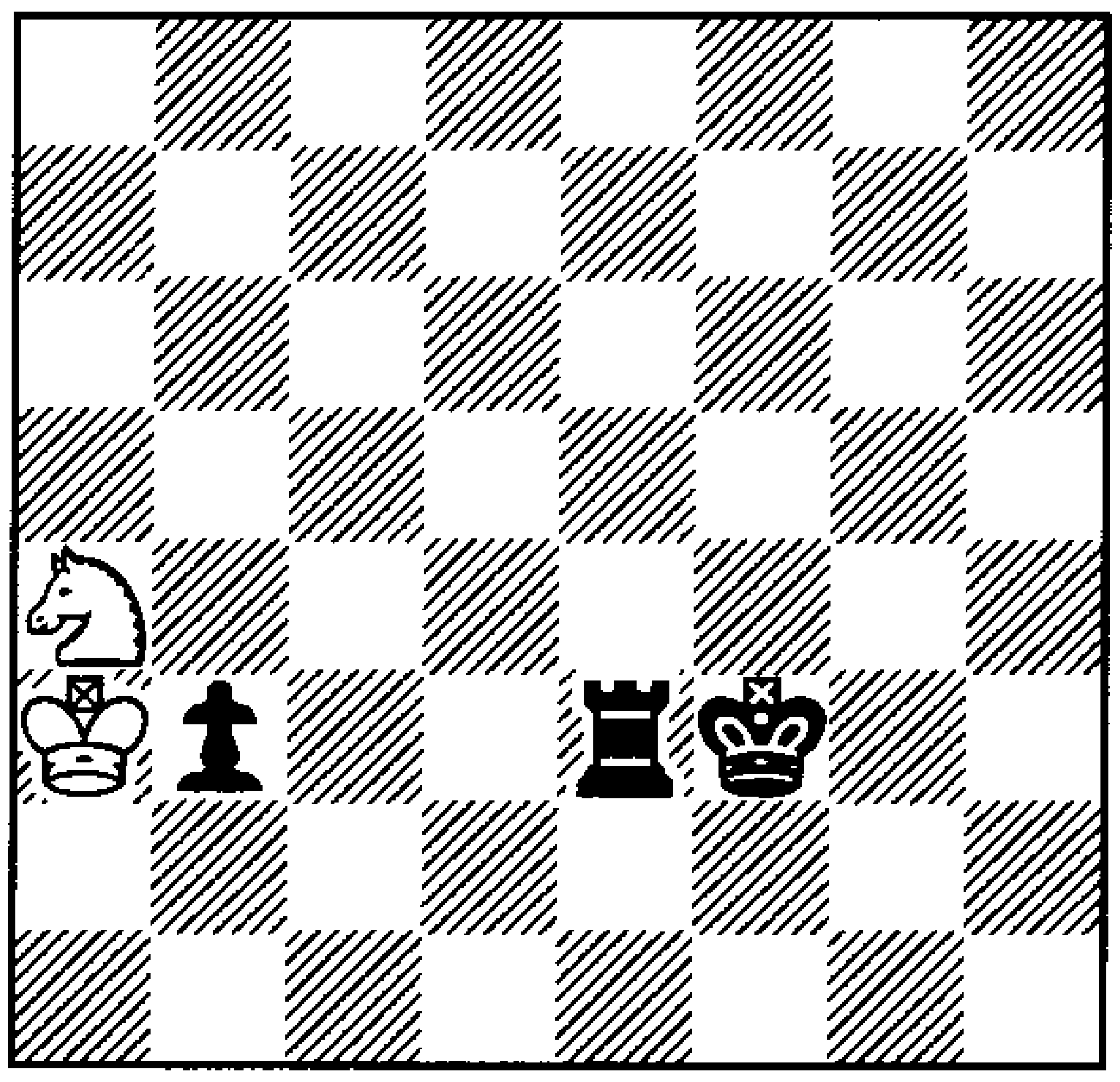
87...♖c8 88 g7! (88 f5? ♔e7 loses) **88...♔e6 89 g8♕+ ♖xg8 90 ♔c4 ♖g3**

Or 90...♖b8 91 ♔c3 ♔f5 92 ♘d3 ♖b6 93 ♘b2 (not 93 ♔b2? ♔e4) 93...♔xf4 94 ♘a4 ♖b8 95 ♘b2 with a draw (Shereshevsky).

91 ♘a4 ♔f5 92 ♔b4 ♔xf4 93 ♘b2 ♔e4 94 ♘a4 ♔d4 95 ♘b2 ♖f3

'An attempt to bring over the king to d2 in the rear of the rook. Meanwhile, however, White had time to post his king on b2 so that further attempts to approach must remain futile. An unusual game rich in vicissitudes.' (Alekhine)

96 ♘a4 ♖e3 97 ♘b2 ♔e4 98 ♘a4 ♔f3 99 ♔a3!



99...♔e4

Or 99...♔e2 100 ♘c5 ♔d2 101 ♔b2 with a draw.

100 ♔b4 ♔d4 101 ♘b2 ♖h3 102 ♘a4 ♔d3 103 ♔xb3 ♔d4+ ½-½

'This is probably the most incredible, the most paradoxical draw in the history of international tournaments.' (B. Vainstein) When he shook his opponent's hand, the American master exclaimed: 'I didn't know that in the endgame a knight could draw against a rook and a pawn!'

In New York Richard Réti distinguished himself with his famous opening, one of the pillars of the new-fangled stream of chess thinking – hypermodernism (cf. p.275). However, at the very height of the tournament race it met its match: the wise Lasker introduced a sound system of defence which later acquired his name.

Game 71

R.Réti-Em.Lasker

New York 1924, 16th round

Réti Opening A12

1 ♘f3 d5 2 c4 c6!? (before this 2...e6 was tried against Réti – *Game No.98*; for 2...d4 cf. *Game No.146*) **3 b3**

Avoiding the questionable 3 d4 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 dxc4 5 e3 b5 6 a4 b4 7 ♘a2 e6 (Réti-Lasker, Mährisch-Ostrau 1923). This theme was later developed in the game Reshevsky-Smyslov (USSR-USA radio match 1945), which is examined in the second volume.

3...♗f5!?

'With this move Dr Lasker as second player applies the London system of development, which, with colours transposed, has several times stood the test against the double fianchetto,' writes Alekhine, having in mind 1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 g6 3 ♗f4 ♗g7 4 h3 (4 ♘bd2 c5 5 e3 d6 6 c3 ♘c6 7 h3 0-0 8 ♗c4 Alekhine-Euwe, London 1922) 4...0-0 5 ♘bd2 d6 6 e3 ♘bd7 7 c3 c5 8 ♗c4 b6 9 0-0 ♗b7 10 ♕e2 ♕c7 11 ♗h2 ♖ae8 12 e4 (Capablanca-Réti, London 1922), or 4...c5 5 e3 b6 6 ♘bd2 ♗b7 7 ♗d3 0-0 8 0-0 d6 9 c3 ♘bd7 10 ♕e2 ♖c8 11 a4 (Réti-Alekhine, New York 1924, 13th round).

A modern variation is 3...♗g4, which, as it happens, has also been played by me: against Gulko (46th USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1978) and Leko (Wijk aan Zee 2001). In any case, Black's main idea is to develop his c8-bishop outside the pawn chain and only then set up the defensive wall c6-d5-e6.

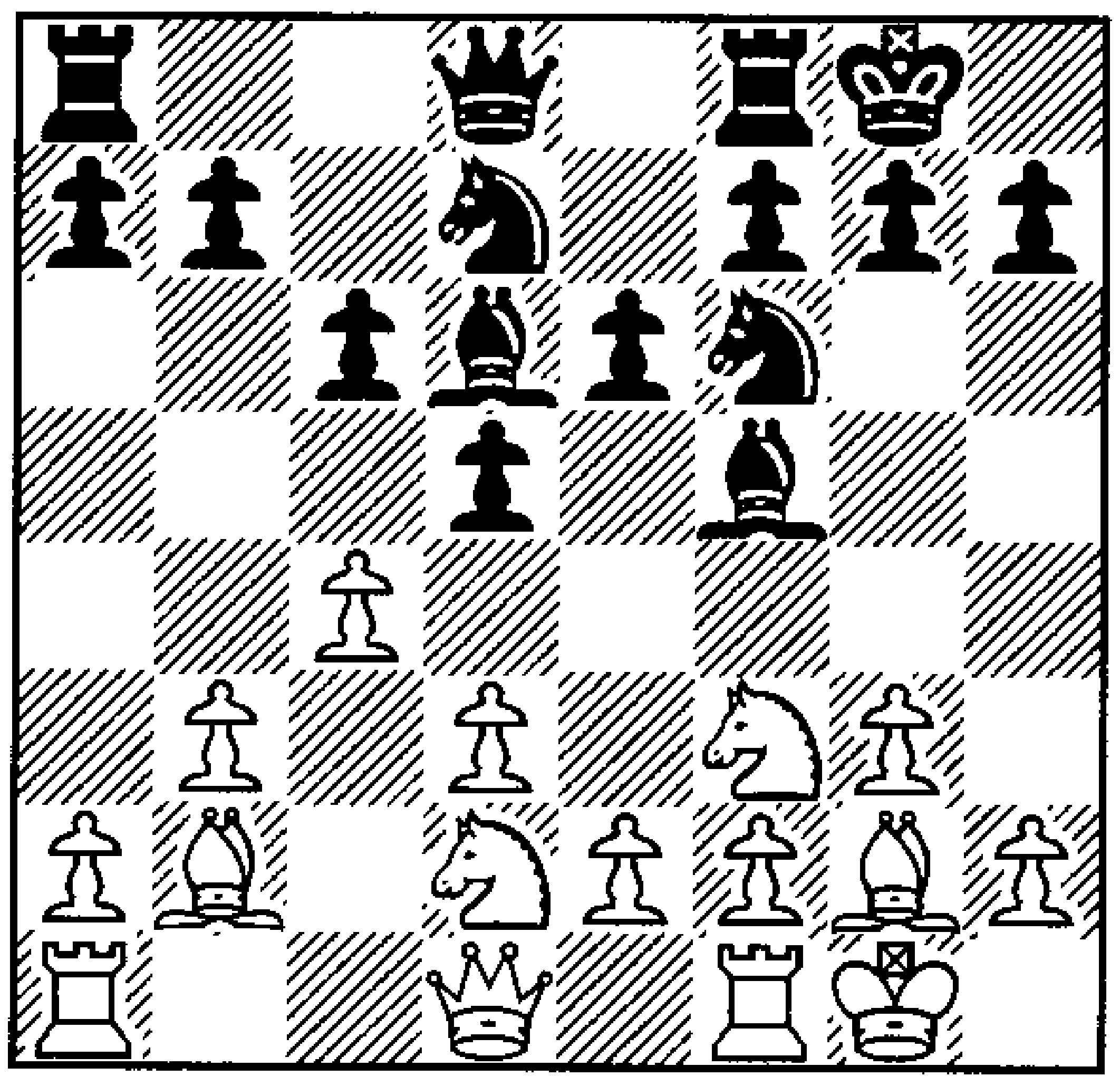
4 g3 ♘f6 5 ♗g2 ♘bd7

'More cautious would have been first 5...e6, as White might assure himself of a positional advantage, even if microscopical, by means of 6 cxd5! cxd5 7 ♗b2 followed by ♘c3 etc. (compare the game Dr Lasker-Alekhine from the 18th round, wherein, with colours transposed, this method was adopted successfully).' (Alekhine)

6 ♗b2 e6 7 0-0 ♗d6

A good alternative was 7...♗e7 8 d3 0-0 9 ♘bd2 a5!? (managing without 9...h6 – *Game No.108*), and if 10 ♘h4, then 10...♗g4 11 h3 ♗h5 12 g4 ♗g6 with equality.

8 d3 0-0 9 ♘bd2 (9 ♘c3 ♕e7 equalises)



9...e5?!

Rather premature activity. Alekhine attaches an exclamation mark to this move, ignoring the possible reply 10 cxd5 cxd5 11 e4! 9...h6 will do, and if 10 cxd5 cxd5 11 e4, then 11...dxe4 12 dxe4 ♗g4! (but not 12...♗xe4? 13 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 14 ♘d4 ♘df6 15 ♖e1 with a strong initiative for White), but the most logical is 9...♕e7! 10 a3 a5 with a normal game.

10 cxd5 cxd5 11 ♖c1?!

Only 11 e4! would have given hope of at least some advantage: 11...dxe4 12 dxe4 ♗xe4?! 13 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 14 ♘h4 ♘df6 15 ♖e1 ♘c5 16 ♘f5, or 11...♗e6 (11...♗g4 12 exd5 and ♘c4!) 12 exd5 ♗xd5 13 ♘c4 ♕b8 14 ♖e1 ♖e8 15 ♖c1 etc. But Réti carries out his favourite original plan.

11...♕e7 12 ♖c2

With the intention of ♕a1 and ♖fc1. Réti's recommendation 12 ♖e1 with the belated idea of e2-e4 is hardly dangerous, although perhaps it would have been rather more solid.

12...a5! (Lasker sensed the correct course of play) **13 a4**

White could not allow ...a5-a4, but now his b3-pawn and the b4-square are weak.

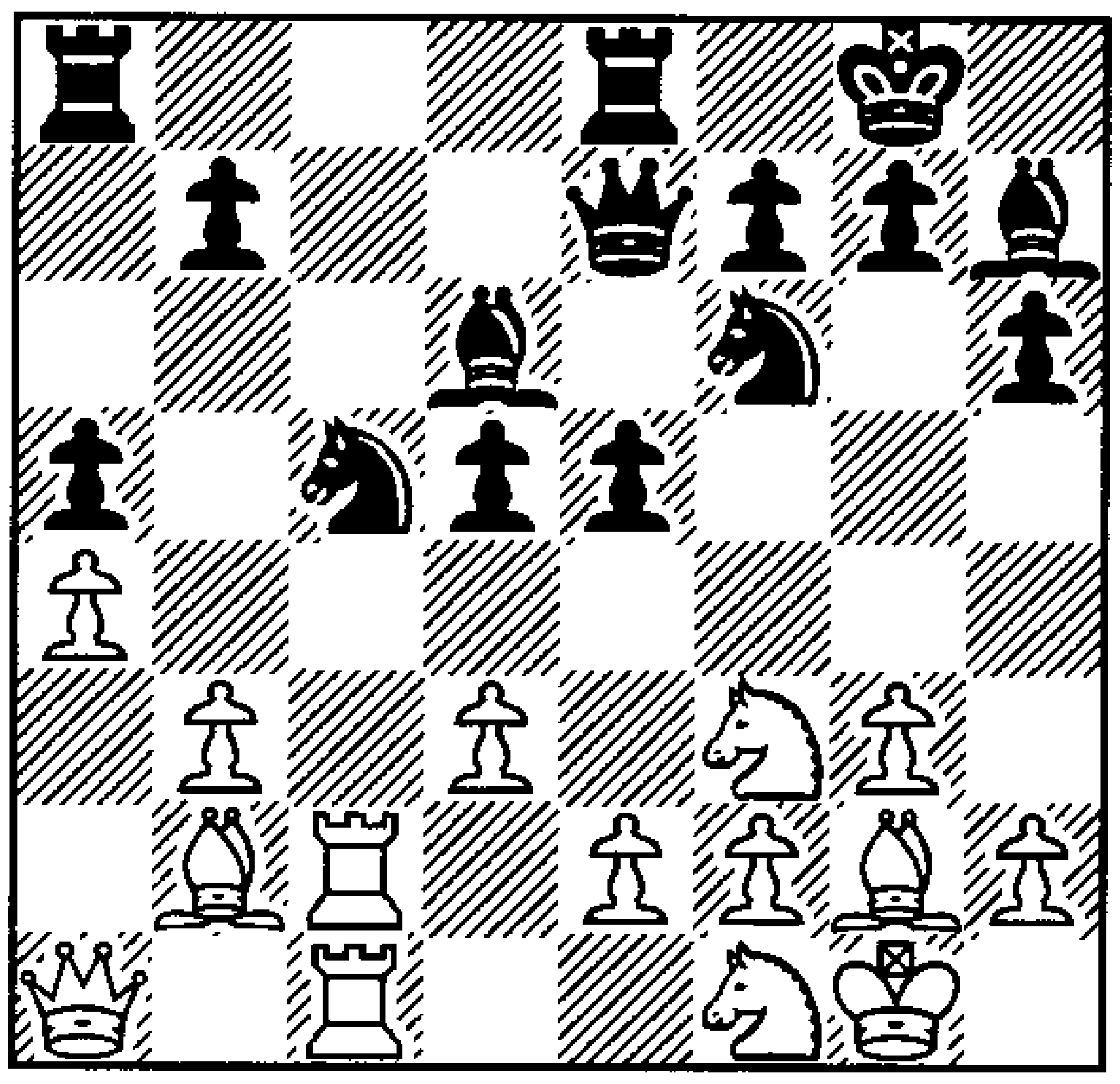
13...h6 (in order after ...♖fe8 and ...♗h7 to threaten the breakthrough ...e5-e4-e3) **14 ♕a1**

After 14 ♘h4?! ♗h7 15 e4 ♘c5! Black would have seized the initiative.

14...♖fe8 15 ♖fc1 ♗h7 16 ♘f1 (in parrying ...e5-e4, White leaves his b3-pawn undefended)

16...♘c5!?

If 16...e4 17 dxe4, then 17...♗xe4 18 ♖c3 ♖ad8 is unclear, while 17...dxe4 18 ♘d4 e3 19 ♘xe3! ♗xc2 20 ♖xc2 is entirely advantageous to White, who has two strong bishops. But what is he to do now? Imperceptibly Lasker has outplayed his opponent...



17 ♖xc5!?

'With correct position judgement White seeks his salvation in this sacrifice by which he can dispose of one of Black's centre pawns. 17 ♕a2, for instance, would have been apparently less profitable on account of 17...♘a6.' (Alekhine)

17...♗xc5 18 ♘xe5 ♖ac8

In my view, a continuation not mentioned by the commentators was more accurate: 18...♗d6! 19 f4 ♖ac8 with hopes of converting the exchange advantage.

19 ♘e3 ♕e6 20 h3 ♗d6?

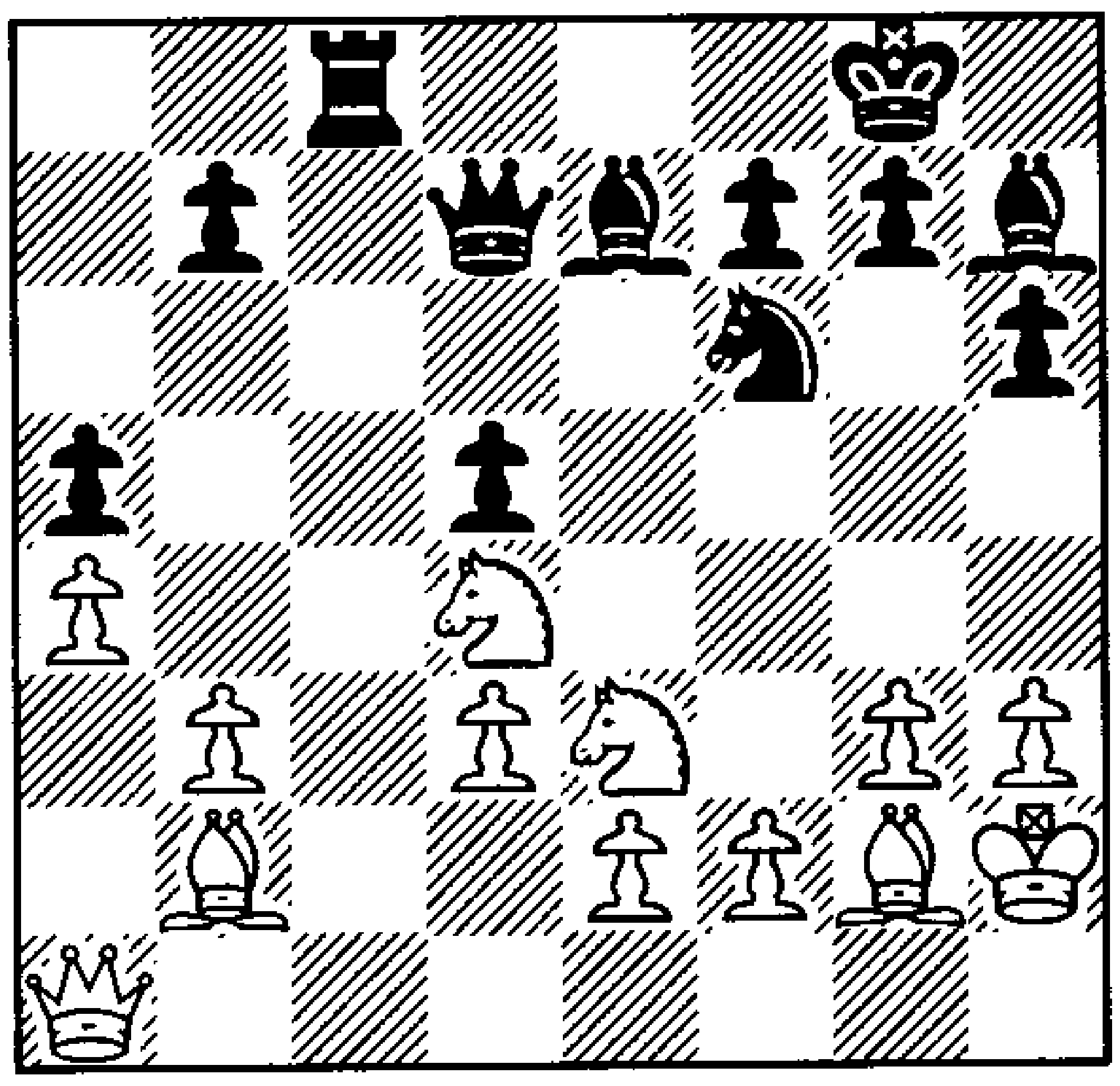
Apparently an oversight. 'A mistake which might have had unpleasant consequences and in place of which might best have been played 20...b6 in order to safeguard the queen's wing as well as the position of the bishop. After 21 d4 he would still have had sufficient counterplay by occupying the square e4, and in the event of other moves a plan leading to simplification could have been undertaken with 21...d4 22 ♘c4 ♘d7 etc., after which his material advantage would finally have been decisive.' (Alekhine) Also good was the direct 20...♗xe3!? 21 fxe3 ♕b6 22 ♗d4 ♕xb3 23 ♖b1 ♕c2 24 ♖xb7 ♕xe2.

21 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 22 ♘f3?

'White is not aware that Dame Fortune smiles at him. By 22 ♘5g4 ♘xg4 23 hxg4 (*or 23 ♗xd5!? ♕e7 24 ♘xg4 – G. K.*) he could have won a second pawn for the exchange and thereby have avoided anyway the danger of loss. After 23...♗f8 (23...♗xg3 24 ♗xg7 etc.) 24 ♗xd5 ♕d7 25 ♗f3 it would have been for Black, possibly through 25...b5, to strive for a difficult draw.' (Alekhine) Or 23...♗c5 24 ♗xd5 ♕d7 25 ♗d4 etc.

22...♗e7 23 ♘d4 ♕d7 24 ♔h2?!

'The beginning of an artificial manoeuvre, the insufficiency of which is demonstrated by Dr Lasker with marvellous clearness and precision. Better drawing chances were offered by 24 ♘b5, which, on account of the threat of ♗d4 followed by ♘c3 etc., would have forced Black, after ...♗f5-e6, to permit the exchange of that bishop, thereby strengthening the power of the hostile pair of bishops.' (Alekhine)



24...h5! 25 ♕h1

'Even for Réti himself this is almost too "original". In any event this move would have been ineffective if Black had been merely content to protect his pawn simply by means of 25...♖d8. His next move, however, is much more energetic and to the point.' (Alekhine)

25...h4! 26 ♘xd5

Alekhine buries White too early, saying that the endgame after 26 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 27 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 28 ♘xd5 ♗c5 is hopeless for him (29 ♘b5 ♗f5!) – after 29 ♘e3! hxg3+ it would have been far from easy to dismantle the unusual knight harness.

26...hxg3+ 27 fxg3 ♘xd5 28 ♗xd5 ♗f6! (a terrible pin) **29 ♗xb7** (if 29 ♕g2 with the idea of 29...♖c5 30 e4 there is the reply 29...♗xd4 30 ♗xd4 ♖c2 31 ♕f3 ♗f5!)

29...♖c5

29...♖d8 30 e3 ♗xd3 was also possible.

30 ♗a6?

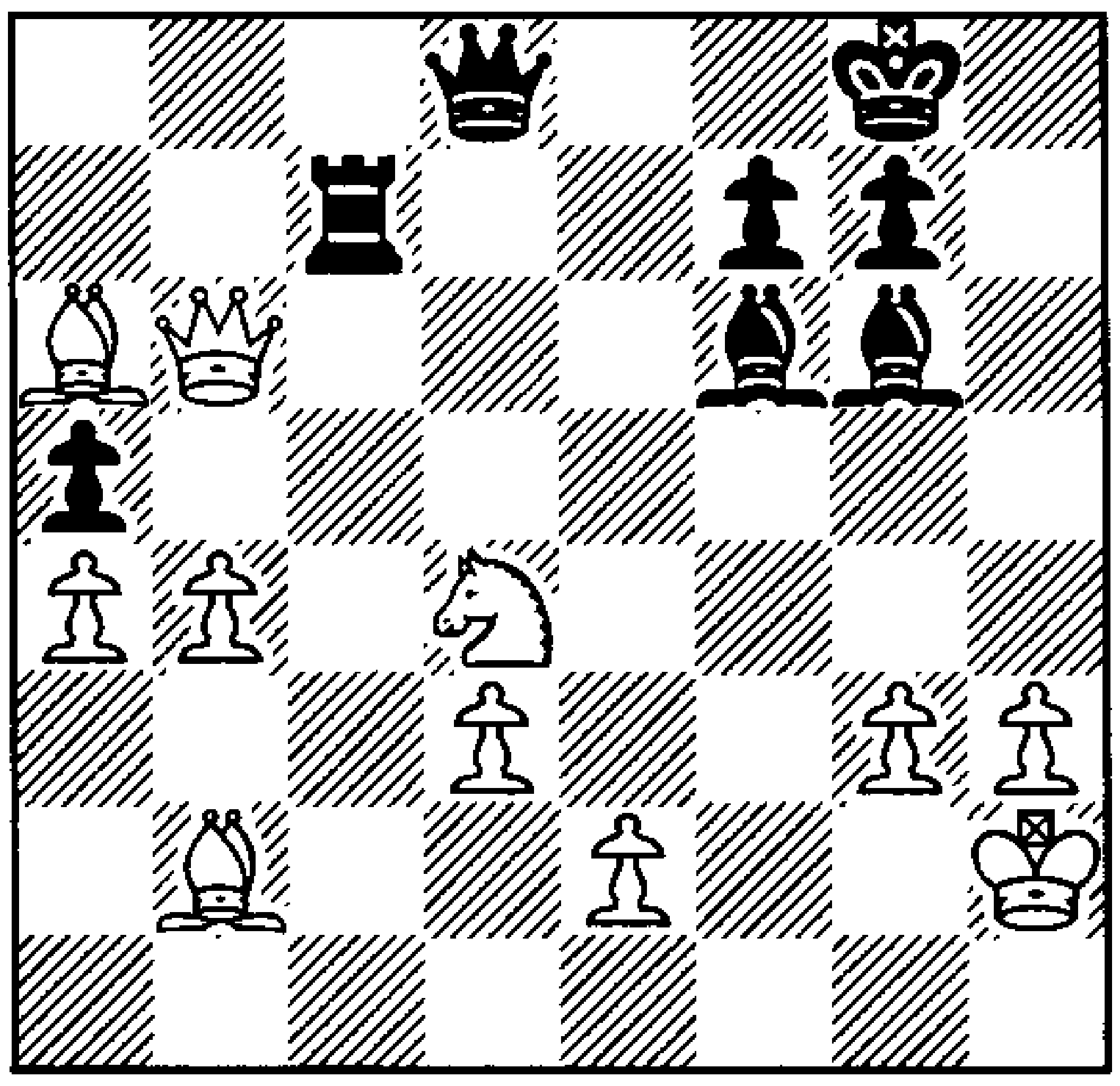
The fatal last move before the time control (with the threat of 31 ♕a8+). Alekhine attaches an exclamation mark to it, but the cold-hearted Fritz shows that essential was 30 ♗e4 ♗xd4 31 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 32 ♕e4+ f5 33 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 34 ♗xd4 ♖c2 35 ♔g2 (inferior is 35 ♗b6?! ♖xe2+ 36 ♔g1 ♖b2 37 ♗xa5 ♖xb3) 35...♖xe2+ 36 ♔f3 ♖e8 37 ♗c3 ♖b8 38 ♗xa5 ♖xb3 39 ♔f4 ♖xd3 40 ♗b6 with drawing chances.

30...♗g6 31 ♕b7 ♕d8

In my opinion, 31...♕d6! would have won

more quickly, for example: 32 ♗a3 (32 b4? ♖g5; nothing is changed by 32 ♕a8+ ♔h7) 32...♗xd4 33 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 34 ♗c4 ♕d4!

32 b4 (unsuitable is 32 e3 ♗xd4 33 ♗xd4 ♖c2+ 34 ♔h1 ♕d6 and wins) **32...♖c7 33 ♕b6**



33...♖d7! 34 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 35 e3

The point is that if 35 ♘c6? Black has 35...♖d6 36 ♗xf6 ♖xc6 winning.

35...axb4 36 ♔g2

'A trifle better would have been 36 ♗c4, but even then Black would have won eventually after 36...♖a8 37 ♗b5 ♗f5 followed by the transfer of this bishop to b3.' (Alekhine)

36...♗xd4 37 exd4

'So, the hypermodern idea of caring for the central pawns has been carried out by Réti consistently and, it can be said, uncompromisingly: the game is lost, but the pawns are still intact! Incidentally, if 37 ♗xd4 Black would have won by 37...♖xd4 38 exd4 b3 39 ♗c4 b2 40 ♗a2 ♗xd3.' (B. Vainstein)

However, it was shown by Alekhine that after 41 a5! b1♕ 42 ♗xb1 ♗xb1 43 a6! (but not 43 ♔f3? ♗d3 44 d5 ♔f8 45 ♔e3 ♗f1 46 ♔d4 ♔e7 47 ♔c5 ♔d7 48 h4 f5 49 d6 ♗g2 50 a6 g6 and Black wins) 43...♗e4+ 44 ♔f2 f6 45 ♔e3 ♗d5 46 ♔f4 ♔f7 47 h4 ♔g6 48 g4 ♗a8 49 a7 ♗b7 50 g5 White gains a draw. And after 37 ♗xd4 he recommended the simple 37...♗f5! 38 ♔f3 (38 ♗c4 ♗e6) 38...♗d7 winning.

37...♗f5 38 ♗b7 ♗e6! 39 ♔f3 (39 a5 ♗d5+) **39...♗b3 40 ♗c6 ♖d6 41 ♗b5 ♖f6+ 42 ♔e3 ♖e6+! 43 ♔f4**

Only a little better was 43 ♔d2 (43 ♔f3 ♗d1+) 43...♖g6 44 g4 ♖h6.

43...♖e2 44 ♗c1 ♖c2 45 ♗e3 ♗d5 0-1

After this important win Lasker scored a further 5½ out of 6(!), and Capa was not able to keep pace with him...

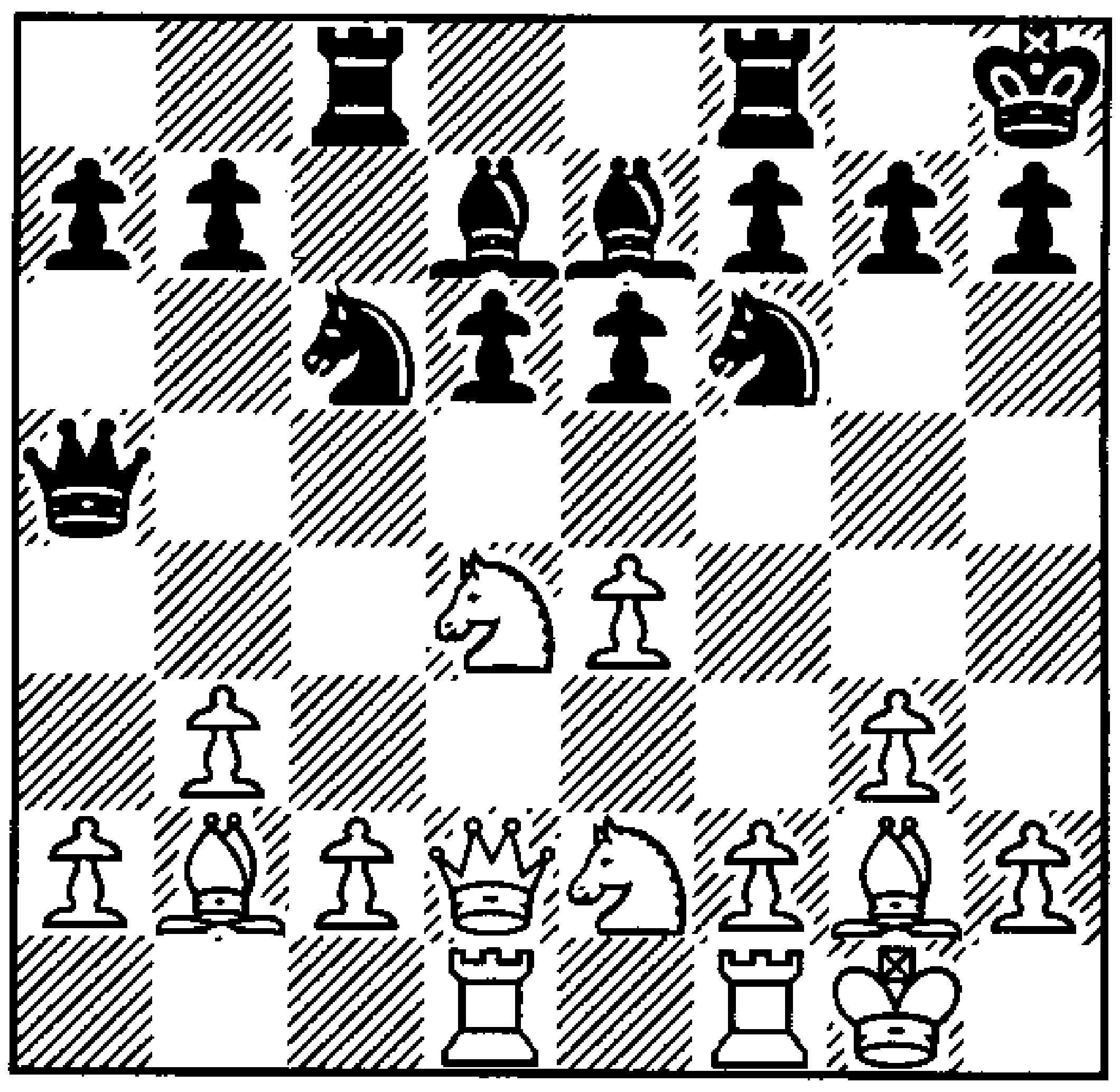
Eighteen months later the ex-champion also came ahead of the 'Cuban Morphy' at the First Moscow International Tournament (1925): 1. Bogoljubow – 15½ out of 20; 2. Lasker 14; 3. Capablanca 13½; 4. Marshall – 12½; 5-6. Tartakower and Torre – 12; 7-8. Réti and Romanovsky 11½; 9-10. Grünfeld and Ilyin-Genevsky – 10½; 11. Bohatirchuk – 10; 12-14. Verlinsky, Rubinstein and Spielmann – 9½; 15. Levenfish – 9 etc. Not only the third, but also the second chess king delighted the many thousands of spectators with their play, assisting the famous 'chess fever'.

In the following game he was once more ahead of his time. Then his queen sacrifice was a revelation – whereas now it is a typical procedure and no longer really a sacrifice, but simply a form of exchange.

Game 72

A.Ilyin-Genevsky-Em.Lasker

Moscow 1925



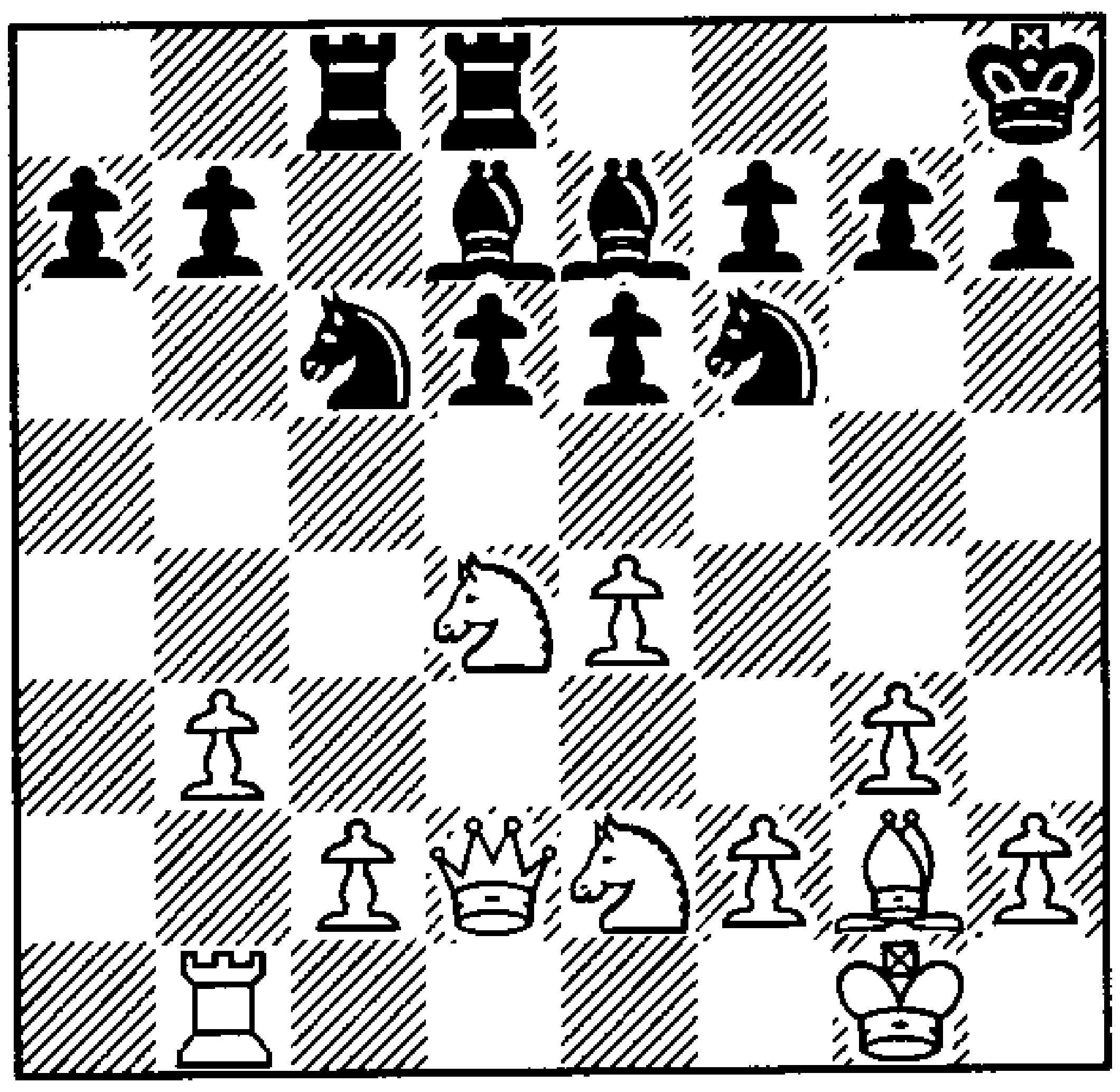
White has just played 13 ♘ce2!, inviting

13...♕xd2 14 ♖xd2 followed by ♖fd1 and c2-c4 with a more than comfortable game...

13...♕xa2!!

'Here the thought probably occurred to Lasker: if yesterday, playing the Sicilian, Ilyin-Genevsky sacrificed his queen against Capablanca and won, why shouldn't I do the same?' (B. Vainstein)

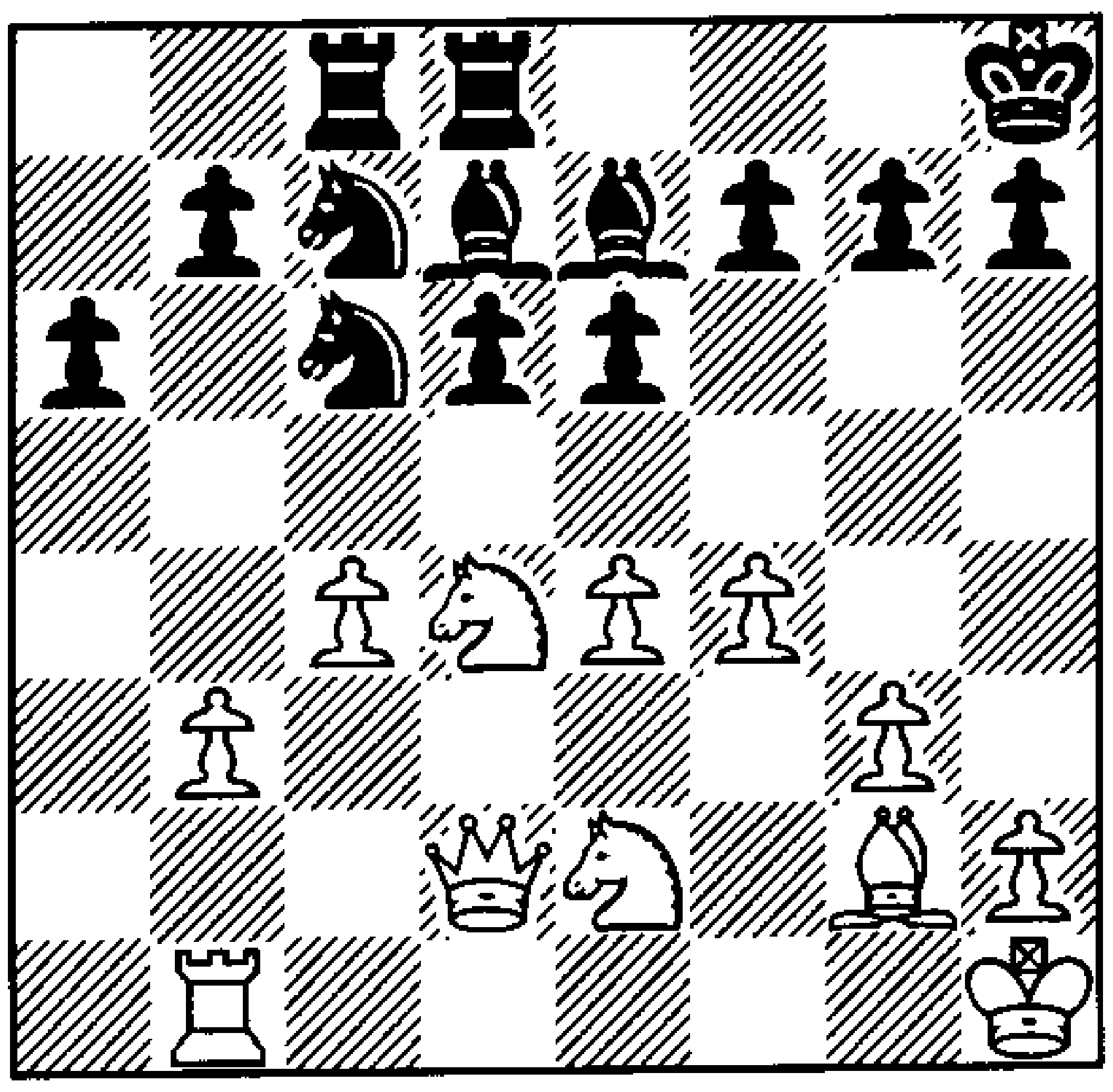
14 ♖a1 ♕xb2 15 ♖fb1 ♕xb1+ 16 ♖xb1 ♖fd8



17 c4 ♘e8

White also has some advantage after 17...a6 18 ♘c2 ♘b8 19 ♖d1 b5 20 ♘e3 bxc4 21 ♘xc4. But this does not concern Lasker at all: his main aim was to upset the opponent's familiar routine, and to force him to play a position with an unusual balance of forces.

18 f4 a6 19 ♔h1 (19 ♘c2!? b5 20 cxb5 axb5 21 ♖c1 ♘f6 22 ♕d3 ♖a8 23 ♘ed4 was also not bad) **19...♘c7**



20 ♕e3

20 ♘xc6!? bxc6 21 ♕a5 c5 22 ♖d1 was interesting.

20...♖b8

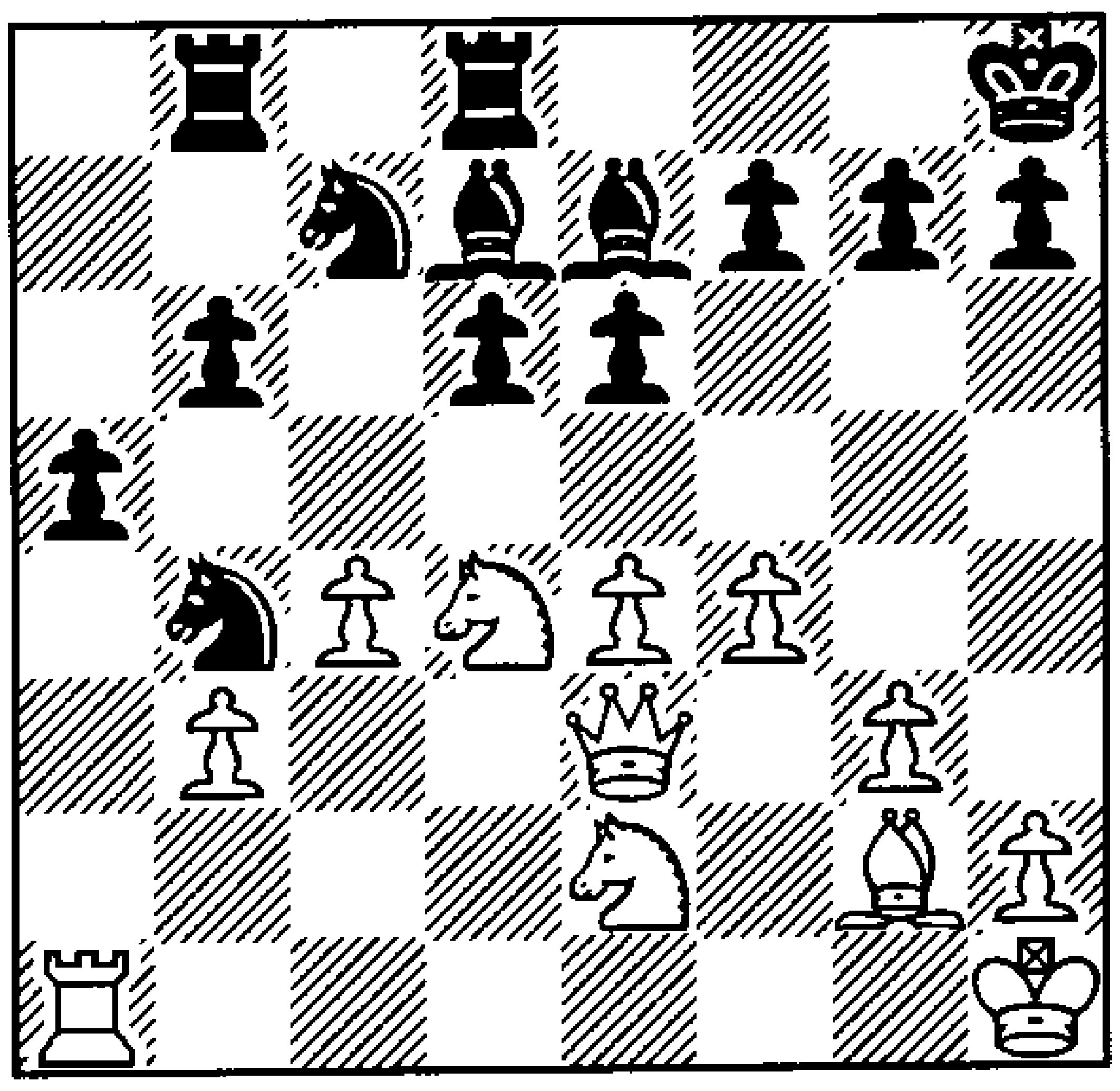
Black also has a choice: 20...♘xd4!? 21 ♕xd4 b5 22 ♕a7 e5 with counterplay.

21 ♖d1 ♘b4 22 ♕c3 a5 23 ♖a1? (White begins to 'drift'; 23 ♘c2 ♘ca6 24 ♗f3 was correct) **23...b6**

Threatening ...♗f6.

24 ♕e3?

A fatal mistake. White would have maintained approximate equality by 24 ♖d1 ♗f6 (or 24...♖bc8 25 ♕f3 b5) 25 ♕e3 b5 26 e5 dxe5 27 fxe5 ♗e7 28 ♕f4 ♗e8 29 ♘c3 bxc4 30 bxc4 ♘ca6 etc.



24...e5! 25 ♘f5

Or 25 fxe5 dxe5 26 ♘f5 ♗xf5 27 exf5 ♘c2 28 ♕xe5 ♗f6 29 ♕xc7 ♘xa1 30 ♗d5 ♘xb3 31 ♕xf7 a4 and White is lost: 32 ♕a7 ♘a5 33 ♔g2 a3 34 ♘c1 ♗d4.

25...♗xf5 26 exf5 ♘c2 27 ♕c3 ♘xa1 28 ♕xa1 ♗f6

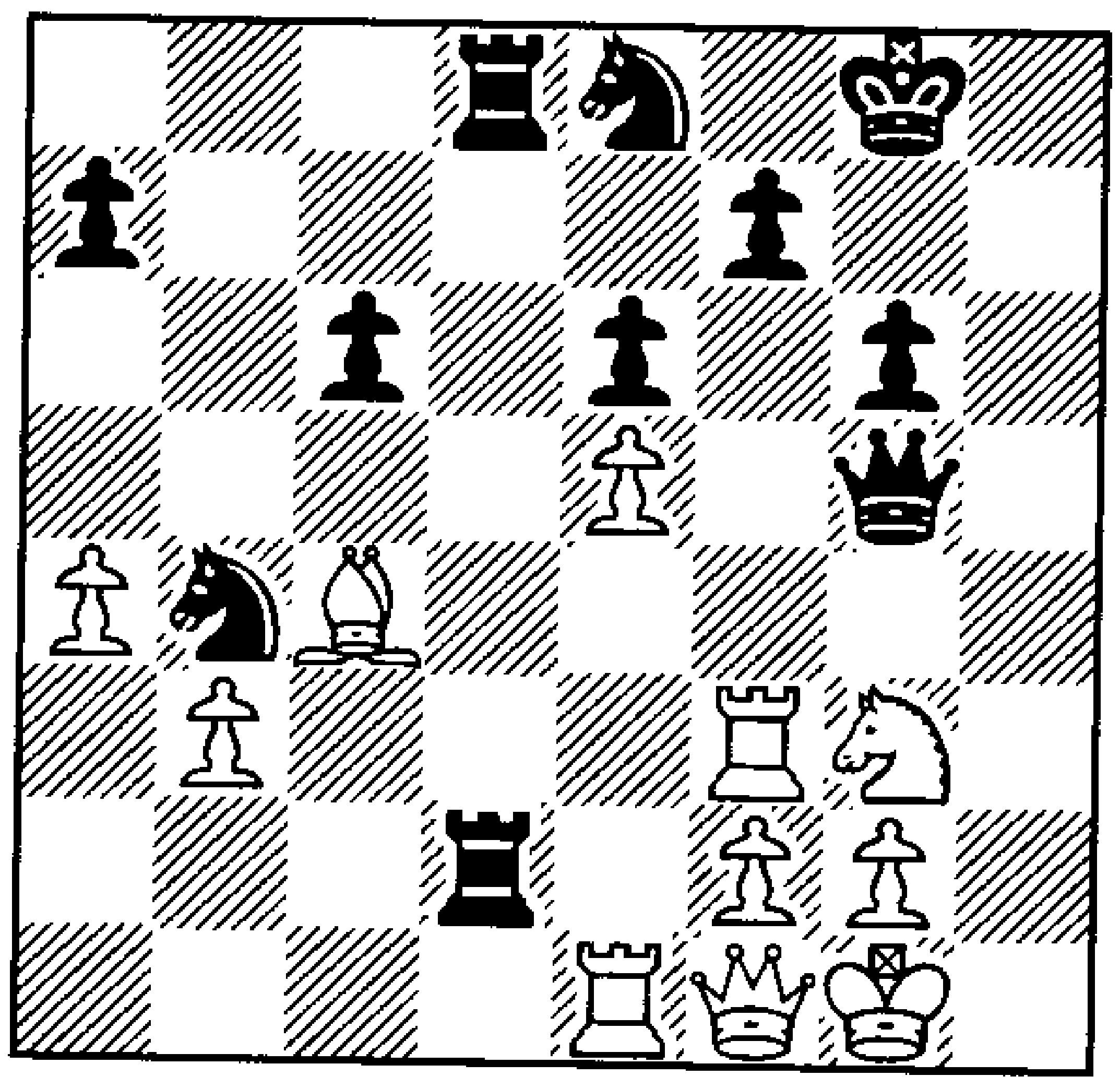
The two rooks and the pawn easily overcome the queen.

29 ♕g1 (29 ♕e1 d5!; 29 ♕a4 ♘a6 and ...♘c5) **29...d5! 30 cxd5 ♘xd5 31 fxe5 ♗xe5 32 g4 f6 33 h4 b5 34 ♘d4 ♘e3! 35 ♕xe3 ♖xd4 36 ♗f3 a4 37 h5 a3 38 ♕e2 ♖bd8 0-1**

To the super-tournament in New York (1927), arranged to 'accommodate' Capablanca, Lasker was no longer invited. And the esteemed Doctor would have retired to a quiet life, fully engaged in philosophy, his favourite contract bridge and... the ancient Japanese game of Go. But Lasker's difficult material situation forced him to return to chess.

The appearance of the 65-year-old ex-monarch at the tournament in Zürich (1934) became the sensation of the season! In the very first round, thoughtfully smoking his usual cigar, he won against Euwe in the good old style.

Game 73
M.Euwe-Em.Lasker
Zürich 1934



The fork ♘e4 is threatened, but:

34...♘c2!

An elegant rejoinder which Euwe had not anticipated.

35 ♘e4 ♕xe5!!

'Colossal! Lasker gives up his queen, obtaining for it rook, minor piece and pawn,' as occurred once in Moscow against Ilyin-Genevsky.' (B. Vainstein)

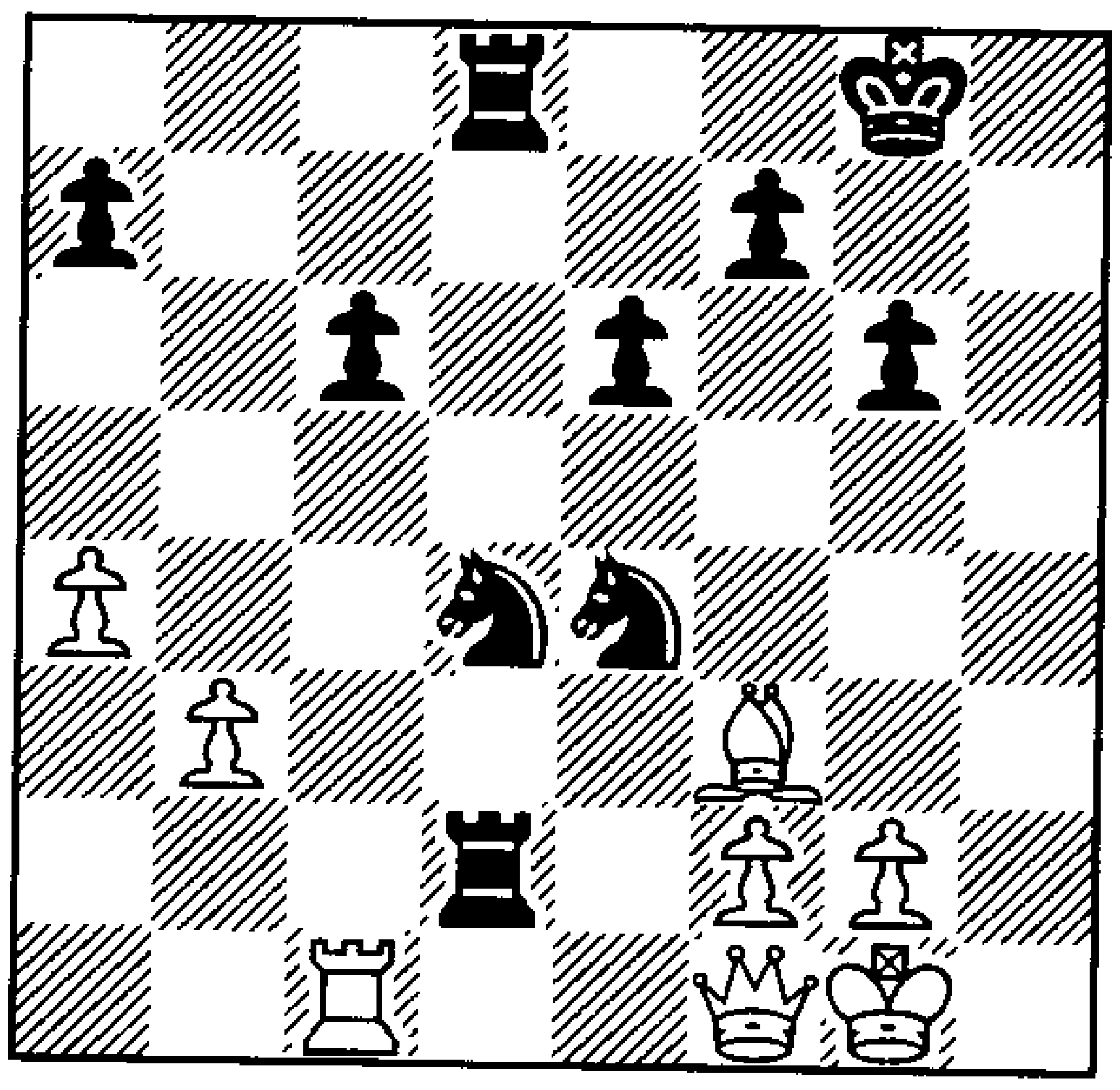
36 ♘f6+ ♕xf6 37 ♖xf6 ♘xf6

Also good was 37...♘xe1!? 38 ♖f4 (38 ♗e2 ♘xf6 39 ♕xe1 ♘e4 and 38 ♖xg6+ fxg6 39 ♗xe6+ ♔g7 40 ♕c4 ♖8d6 both win for Black) 38...♖d1 39 ♔h2 ♖8d2 40 ♗e2 ♘f3+ 41 ♖xf3 ♖xf1 42 ♗xf1 ♘d6 or 42...♔g7.

38 ♖c1

After 38 ♖e2 ♖d1 39 ♖xc2 ♖xf1+ 40 ♗xf1 ♖d6 Black is simply a pawn up as in the previous variation.

38...♘e4 39 ♗e2 ♘d4 40 ♗f3



40...♘xf2

Simpler was 40...♖d5 41 ♗xe4 ♘e2+ 42 ♕xe2 ♖xe2 43 ♗xd5 cxd5 etc.

41 ♕c4 ♘d3 42 ♖f1 ♘e5 43 ♕b4 ♘exf3+ 44 gxf3 ♘e2+ (44...♖d3! wins) **45 ♔h2 ♘f4+ 46 ♔h1 ♖2d4 47 ♕e7**

No better was 47 ♕b7 ♔g7 48 ♕xc6 ♖8d5 etc.

47...♔g7! (weaving a mating net) **48 ♕c7 ♖8d5 49 ♖e1 ♖g5 50 ♕xc6 ♖d8! 0-1**

After starting with 3½ out of 4, Lasker took the lead, and then reached 5½ out of 7... 'Unfortunately, the second half of the tournament was not so successful for him. He won three games, but also lost three, losing twice with White – to Bogoljubow and Nimzowitsch, and once with Black – to Alekhine. It is interesting that all three of these opponents were gaining their first win over Lasker,' comment Vladimir and Isaak Linder in their encyclopaedia *Kings of the Chess World* (2001). 'This poor finish to the tournament was quite understandable. The schedule was very severe – they played for eight hours every day, without any free days or adjournment days.'

The outcome of Zürich was fifth place after Alekhine, Flohr, Euwe and Bogoljubow.

And a year later at the Second Moscow International Tournament (1935) the elderly former world champion achieved his last competitive triumph: 1-2. Botvinnik and Flohr – 13 out of 19; 3. Lasker – 12½ (undefeated!); 4. Capablanca – 12 etc.

It was not just that the second chess king again finished ahead of the third, but he also defeated him in their individual game, receiving one of the brilliancy prizes! 'Lasker was the moral winner of the Moscow tournament,' Zubarev wrote in his summarising article. 'His play was just as deep and rich as in the best years of his phenomenal chess talent.'

In the very strong tournaments Moscow 1936 and Nottingham 1936 his results were more modest, but this is what the then world champion Alekhine wrote about him after Nottingham: 'I consider that it is almost impossible to criticise Lasker, so great is my admiration for him as a person, an artist and a chess writer. At his 67 years, thanks to his youthful energy, will-to-win and incredibly deep treatment of the chess struggle, he remains the same Lasker, if not as a practical player, then as a chess thinker.'

For Lasker's family this was a time of deprivation and wandering: the flight from Hitler's Germany, a year and half in the USSR, departure to the USA in the autumn of the ominous year 1937, chronic lack of money and exhausting work...

He died on 11 January 1941, soon after his 72nd birthday, on a day when he was visited by grandmaster Fine and his wife. Lasker could no longer speak. In a moment shortly before he died, his wife Martha heard Emanuel whisper: 'King of chess...'

In conclusion, as has become customary, here are few opinions of the champions:

Lasker: 'On the chess board lies and hypocrisy do not survive long. The creative combination lays bare the presumption of a lie; the merciless fact, culminating in a checkmate, contradicts the hypocrite.'

Capablanca: 'Lasker, a natural genius, who developed thanks to very hard work in the early period of his career, never adhered to the type of play that could be classified as a definite style. None of the great players has been so incomprehensible to the majority of amateurs and even masters, as Emanuel Lasker.'

Alekhine: 'Lasker was my teacher, and without him I could not have become whom I became. The idea of chess art is unthinkable without Emanuel Lasker.'

Botvinnik: 'Great was Lasker's role in the social recognition of chess, the realisation of its usefulness ("The game of chess eases our life's struggle," he said).'

Tal: 'The greatest of the champions was, of course, Emanuel Lasker. At the chess board he accomplished the impossible!... He was an amazing tactician, winning games that were apparently quite hopeless.'

Karpov: 'The earlier leading lights – Lasker and especially Capablanca – hardly studied the openings at all. They were such geniuses and knew that they would be able to cope with any unpleasantness at the board – which they demonstrated in practice.'

CHAPTER FOUR

José Raúl The Third

The third world champion José Raúl Capablanca y Graupera (19 November 1888 – 8 March 1942) remains one of the most esteemed and legendary figures in the history of chess. In general there is something puzzling about the fact that the most renowned figures in chess – Morphy, Pillsbury, Capablanca and Fischer – were born in America. Although, for example, the last two were diametrically opposed to each other: Fischer was devoted to chess and wrapped up in the game, whereas 'Capa' was unfamiliar with theory and lived, at least in everyday life, outside of chess. He did almost nothing, he worked much less than other players – and he contrived to win the most important tournaments and matches, going undefeated for years (of all the champions he lost the fewest games). Is this not an indication of unlimited talent, of undoubted chess genius?!

Capablanca possessed an amazing ability to quickly see into a position and intuitively grasp its main features. His style, one of the purest, most crystal-clear in the entire history of chess, astonishes one with his logic. As he taught: 'If you have thought up a definite plan, you should carry it out rigorously.'

This great positional player was, so to speak, a natural, intuitive successor of the Steinitz School. 'Whereas Anderssen and Chigorin looked for accidental positions,' writes Lasker, 'Capablanca is guided by the logicality of strong positions. He values only that which is well-founded: solidity of position, pressure on a weak point, he does not trust the accidental, even if it be a problem-like mate, at the required moment he discovers and carries out subtle and far-sighted combinations...'

In contrast to his predecessor on the throne, Lasker, the great psychologist, Capablanca clearly underestimated the role of the psychological element in chess, saying: 'When you sit down to play a game you should think only about the position, but not about the opponent. Whether chess is regarded as a science, or an art, or a sport, all the same psychology bears no relation to it and only stands in the way of real chess.'

Alas, in the end this underestimation and the ease of his victories did him a bad service, as he lost the habit of working on chess: he was champion for only six years, although he could have held the crown for much longer...

The Cuban Morphy

Capablanca was born in Havana, into a large and quite prosperous family. He made the acquaintance of chess when he was not yet five years old, by watching his father play. And from this moment his biography begins to be shrouded in legends. His father, who had been defeated by the boy three days later, took him to the famous Havana Chess Club, where they soon all realised that they could not give him a queen start. The Franco-Polish master Taubenhaus, who was visiting the club, later liked to recall: 'I am the only living master who has given Mr Capablanca a queen!'

The chess atmosphere in Havana was ideal for the growth of the young talent. Cuba was closely linked with the USA, and it had a strong aristocracy, rich clubs and equally rich chess traditions: back in the 1860s Morphy had twice given simultaneous displays in Havana, and in the late 1880s to the early 1890s matches for the world championship between Steinitz and Chigorin (and the Chigorin-Gunsberg match) were held there. Not without reason did Steinitz call the local club the 'Chess Eldorado': at that time chess was obviously flourishing in Havana, and there were players from whom one could learn. True, the young Capa was over-excited by the tense battles and as a result he was only allowed to play at home. At the age of eight he began going to the club on Sundays, and the master Golmayo could no longer give him a rook start, but then a new three-year break occurred.

Capablanca said that his passion for chess was fired by two events: the historic match between Steinitz and Chigorin (1892), which for years was discussed animatedly in Havana, and a simultaneous blindfold display by Pillsbury (1899): 'I was then a very mediocre player, but the reader can well imagine the impression on a child full of imagination produced by a man who could play simultaneously sixteen or more blindfold games of chess at the same time that he played a number of blindfold games of draughts and a hand of duplicate whist. The effect of Pillsbury's displays was immediate. They electrified me, and with the consent of my parents I began to visit the Havana Chess Club. By leaps and bounds I reached the top class in three months, and I was not over twelve when I defeated the champion of Cuba in a set match.' At the age of 13 he had already defeated all the leading Cuban players and towards the end of 1901 he won a match against the then champion of the country, Juan Corzo (+4 -3 =6).

In the summer of 1904 the youth's parents sent him to New York – to study English and to make preparations for entering Columbia University. I should mention that in the USA too there was something of a chess boom: everyone was talking about Marshall's sensational victory at the grandiose tournament in Cambridge Springs; in addition, the world champion Lasker had moved to America and had begun publishing his own magazine. And Capa, with his unique gift and knowledge of languages, picked up everything very quickly and made rapid progress. He began visiting the Manhattan Chess Club and quickly won recognition – in particular, by winning in 1906 a big blitz tournament in which Lasker himself competed. I don't know who the world champion lost to there, but it was then that he met Capablanca and even analysed some problematic position with him.

Soon José Raúl entered university, but within two years he bid farewell to a career as an engineer for the sake of chess. 'In closing this period and looking back upon my style of play I find a great deal of improvement in every respect,' Capablanca later recalled. 'The openings begin to resemble more those of a master, though generally they were much weaker than they should be, as there is too much of slow moving, elaborate plans which cannot be carried out against strong opponents, instead of the simple, forward, strong, attacking moves which should characterise White's development. The middle game has advanced enormously, the combinations are sure and more profound, and there begins to loom the playing for position. The endings I already played very well, and to my mind had attained the high standard for which they were in the future to be well known.'

Early in 1909 the 20-year-old Capablanca made a lengthy tour of 27 USA towns, playing 602 games in 31 simultaneous displays with the staggering result +571 -13 =18. For a complete triumph it only remained for him to defeat the permanent champion of the country, the 31-year-old Frank Marshall. The latter, of course, did not object to a match and accepted the challenge, expecting to defeat the inexperienced novice. A few years before this Marshall had lost matches to Lasker and Tarrasch, but they were the first and second players in the world, whereas this was some boy... A serious delusion! Lasker was much more discerning, predicting a win for the Cuban and stating that he, Lasker, 'will soon, probably, have to play a match for the world championship with Capablanca.'

The intriguing encounter between Capablanca and Marshall (April-June 1909) was held in several USA towns under the aegis of the Manhattan Chess Club. The winner was to be the first to win eight games. After five games Capa was already leading 2-0 (with three draws), and the sixth game demonstrated the overwhelming difference in class between the two opponents.

Game 74

J.R.Capablanca-F.Marshall

Match, Morristown 1909, 6th game

Ruy Lopez C62

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 d6 4 c3 ♗g4?! (what for?!) **5 d3 ♗e7 6 ♘bd2 ♘f6 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♖e1** (Capa plays the opening quietly, not seeing any need to force the play)

8...h6?!

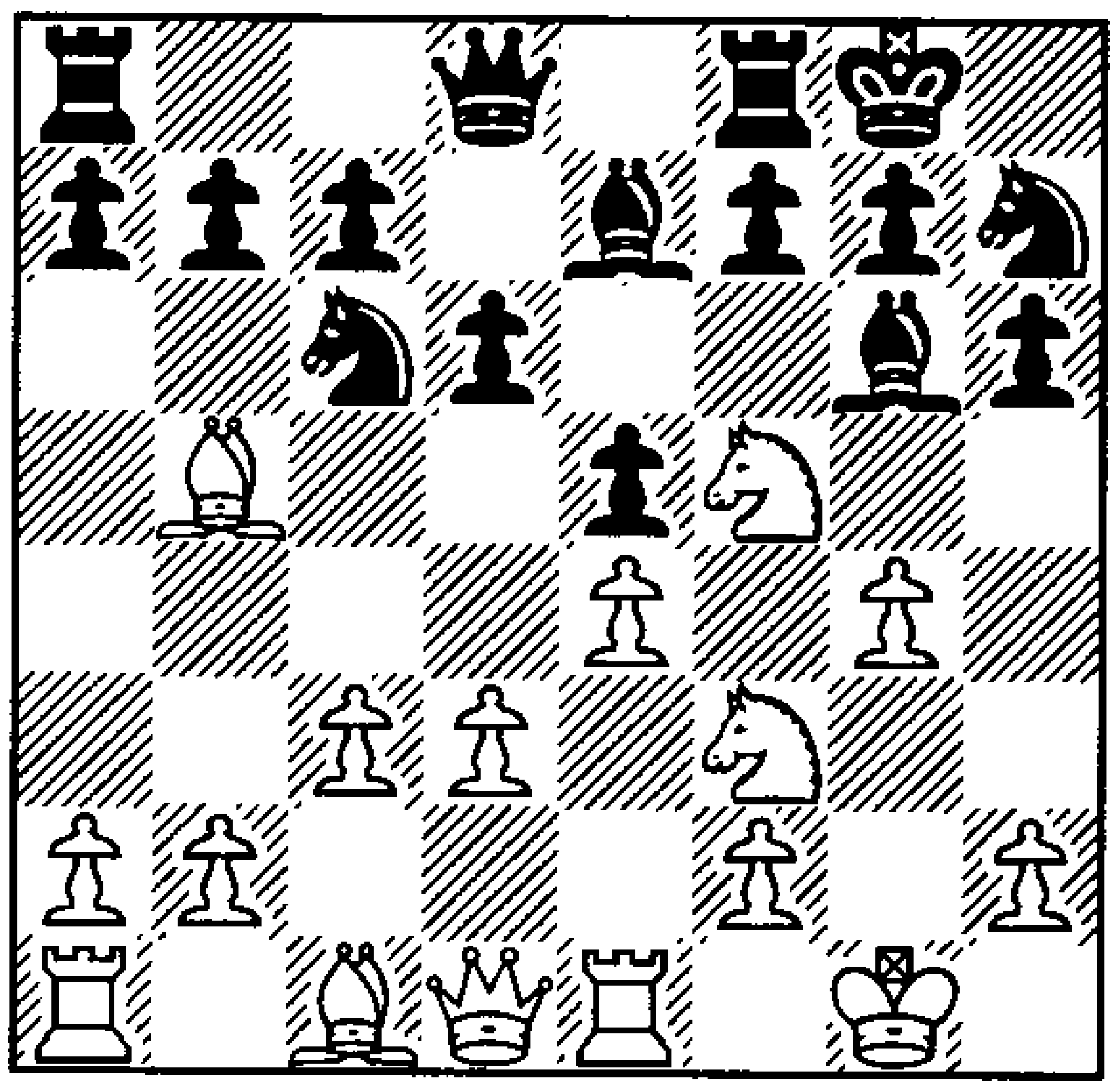
Too slow. Nowadays any master would simply play 8...♘d7.

9 ♘f1 ♘h7?! 10 ♘e3 ♗h5

'If 10...f5 11 exf5 ♗xf5 12 ♘xf5 ♖xf5 13 d4 and White should win, because if 13...exd4 14 ♗xc6 followed by 15 ♘xd4 wins at least a pawn, and if 13...♗f6 (instead of 13...exd4) then 14 ♗d3 wins the exchange.' (Capablanca)

11 g4! ♗g6 12 ♘f5

A turning point.



12...h5?

Should one really help the opponent on that flank where he is attacking?! Marshall himself opens the h-file, along which he will be mated – nothing more and nothing less!

Of course 'better would have been 12...♘g5 in order to simplify the position,' (Capablanca) for example: 13 ♔g2 ♘xf3 14 ♕xf3 ♗g5 15 ♖h1 ♗xc1 16 ♖axc1 ♘e7 17 h4 c6 and Black is alright (Lasker), or 13 d4!? ♘xf3+ 14 ♕xf3 exd4 (but not 14...♗g5?! 15 ♗xc6 bxc6 16 dxe5! dxe5 17 ♖d1) 15 ♗xc6 bxc6 16 cxd4 ♖b8 with a slightly inferior position, but this is not at all the same as that which occurred in the game: here there is a safety margin and nothing tragic. Whereas now Black's position deteriorates sharply.

13 h3 hxg4?!

13...♗g5! was better, although after 14 ♘xg5 ♘xg5 15 ♔g2 d5 16 gxh5 ♗xf5 17 exf5 White has an obvious advantage.

14 hxg4 ♗g5

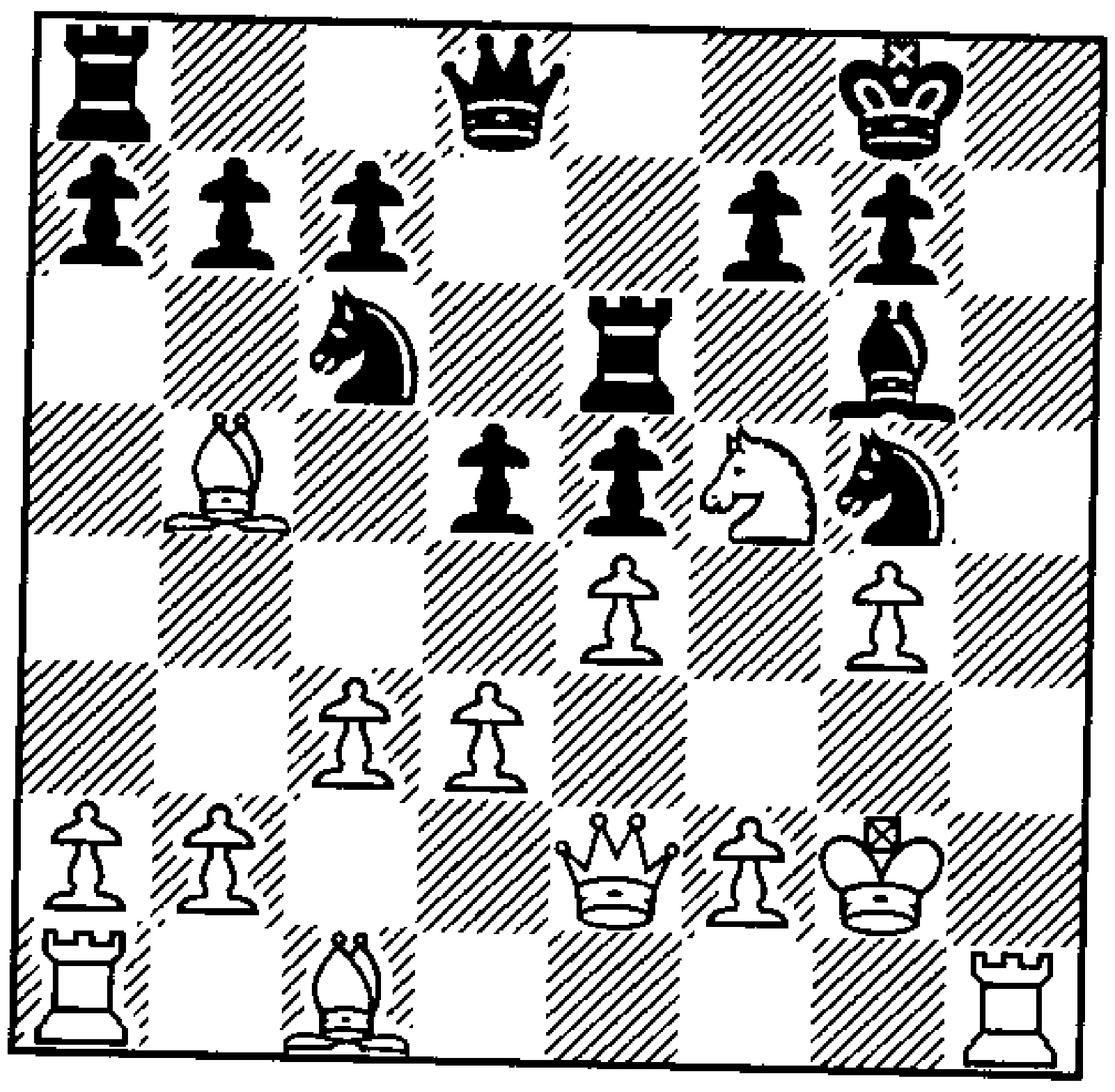
'I would have preferred 14...♘g5, though the chances are that the game cannot be saved.' (Capablanca)

15 ♘xg5 ♘xg5 16 ♔g2 d5 17 ♕e2 ♖e8 18 ♖h1

Here is where it begins... But in fact the game is already decided: White is simply playing for mate.

18...♖e6

In the words of a number of commentators, this is one of the famous Marshall traps. Nowadays such 'devilish traps' merely provoke a smile...



19 ♕e3

'If White is tempted into winning the clear exchange – 19 ♗xg5 (*! – G. K.*) 19...♕xg5 20 exd5 ♗xf5 21 dxe6 ♗xg4 22 exf7+?, then after 22...♔xf7 23 ♕e3 (*if 23 f3! Black has only perpetual check: 23...♗h3+ 24 ♔f2 ♕h4+ 25 ♔e3 ♕f4+ – G. K.*) 23...♗h3+!! he is unexpectedly mated.' (Panov) However, immediately decisive is 22 ♕e3! ♕g6 (22...♕xe3 23 exf7+) 23 ♕g3 ♕xe6 24 ♗c4 ♕g6 25 ♖h4 ♗f5 26 ♕xg6 ♗xg6 27 ♖ah1, and there aren't in fact any devilish traps! Also bad is 21...♗xe6 (instead of 21...♗xg4) 22 ♗xc6 bxc6 (22...♗xg4? 23 ♗f3) 23 f3 etc.

I would imagine that Capablanca did not even calculate these variations: why strain himself, if 19 ♕e3 was sufficient? This was the winner's comment: 'A very important move, the object of which is to shut off the action of the opposing queen, and at the same time to bring the white queen into the game. It also creates a weak diagonal in Black's game, against which the white bishop can act.'

Well, up to a certain time such moves sufficed for Capa. With Marshall he did not need to calculate, with Lasker (1921) he could afford to miscue slightly, but with Alekhine (1927), when extreme accuracy was required, he no longer had the strength for complicated calculations: his laziness had become a habit of many years' standing...

19...f6 20 ♗a4!

A simple transference of the 'Spanish' bishop to its rightful place.

20...♘e7 21 ♗b3 c6 22 ♕g3 a5?!

Black's position is strategically hopeless, but why also weaken the queenside?

23 a4 ♘f7 24 ♗e3 b6

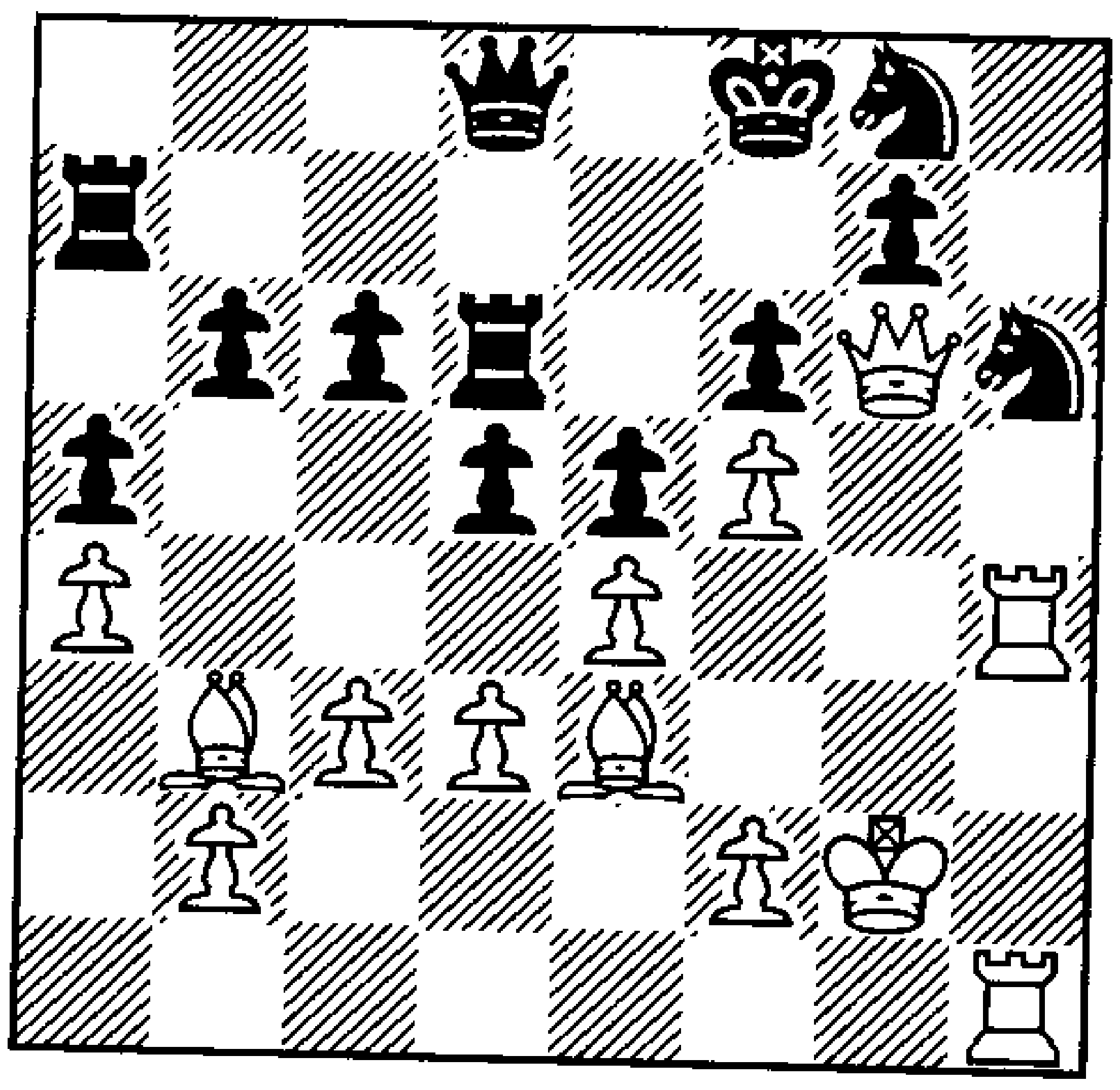
Preventing ♗c5, but the b6-pawn becomes an eternal weakness. There is nothing more that particularly needs commenting on: White has a clear winning plan.

25 ♖h4 ♔f8 26 ♖ah1 ♘g8 27 ♕f3!

'Compelling Black to take the knight, strengthening still more the position of White.' (Capablanca)

27...♗xf5 28 gxf5 ♖d6 29 ♕h5 ♖a7 30 ♕g6 ♘fh6

30...♘e7 31 ♖h8+ ♘xh8 32 ♖xh8+ ♘g8 33 ♕h7 ♔f7 is also bad in view of 34 ♗d1 or 34 ♗xb6.



31 ♖xh6! gxh6 (31...♘xh6 33 ♗xh6 wins) **32 ♗xh6+ ♔e7 33 ♕h7+ ♔e8 34 ♕xg8+ ♔d7 35 ♕h7+ ♕e7 36 ♗f8 ♕xh7 37 ♖xh7+ ♔c8 38 ♖xa7 1-0**

'This is one of my best games.' (Capablanca).

In the seventh game Marshall managed to open his account, but then he was completely overwhelmed. After winning the eighth, 11th, 12th and 13th games, Capablanca only had to score one more win. And here there suddenly came a string of draws – the eternal accompaniment to unlimited matches in the 20th century: the players played nine successive draws!

The last game in the match was the 23rd, the finish to which created an indelible impression on Capablanca's contemporaries. It is a classic example of converting a factor that had been exalted by Steinitz and Tarrasch – a queenside pawn majority.

Game 75
F.Marshall-J.R.Capablanca
Match, New York 1909, 23rd game
Queen's Gambit D33

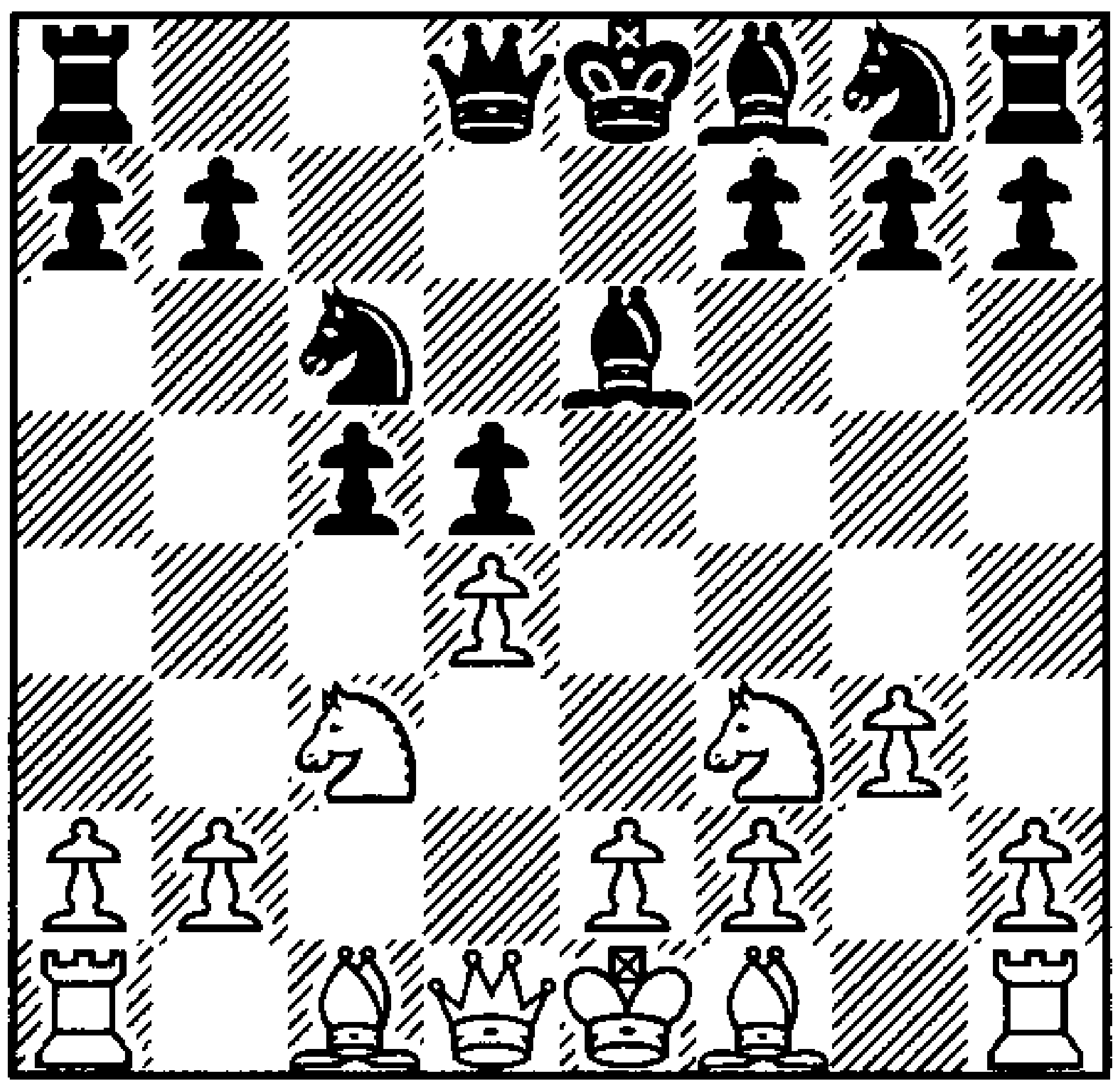
1 d4 d5 2 c4

Not without reason was Marshall called the 'fearless knight of the Queen's Gambit': this is how he played throughout the match, with the exception of the 17th game, where the Four Knights Game occurred.

2...e6 3 ♘c3 c5

Capablanca's main weapon was the defence named after Lasker, who had employed it against Marshall in the match for the world championship (1907) – 3...♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 e3 ♘e4 6 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 etc. Here the Cuban did not have any particular problems and he achieved a score of +3 -1 =4.

4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♘f3 ♘c6 6 g3 ♗e6?!



Later Capablanca also played this against Rubinstein (*Game No.64*). But then he gave up the Tarrasch Defence, deciding not to give himself weaknesses. Even so, 6...♘f6 7 ♗g2 ♗e7 is more accurate – the c8-bishop can come out to g4, and the king's rook to e8, creating pressure on the e-file.

7 ♗g2 ♗e7

In the first game after 7...♘f6 8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 10 0-0 cxd4 11 ♘b5 ♖c8 12 ♘fxd4 ♗c5 14 ♘xe6 fxe6 15 ♕a4+ ♔f7 Capa gained a draw without difficulty.

8 0-0 ♘f6 9 ♗g5?!

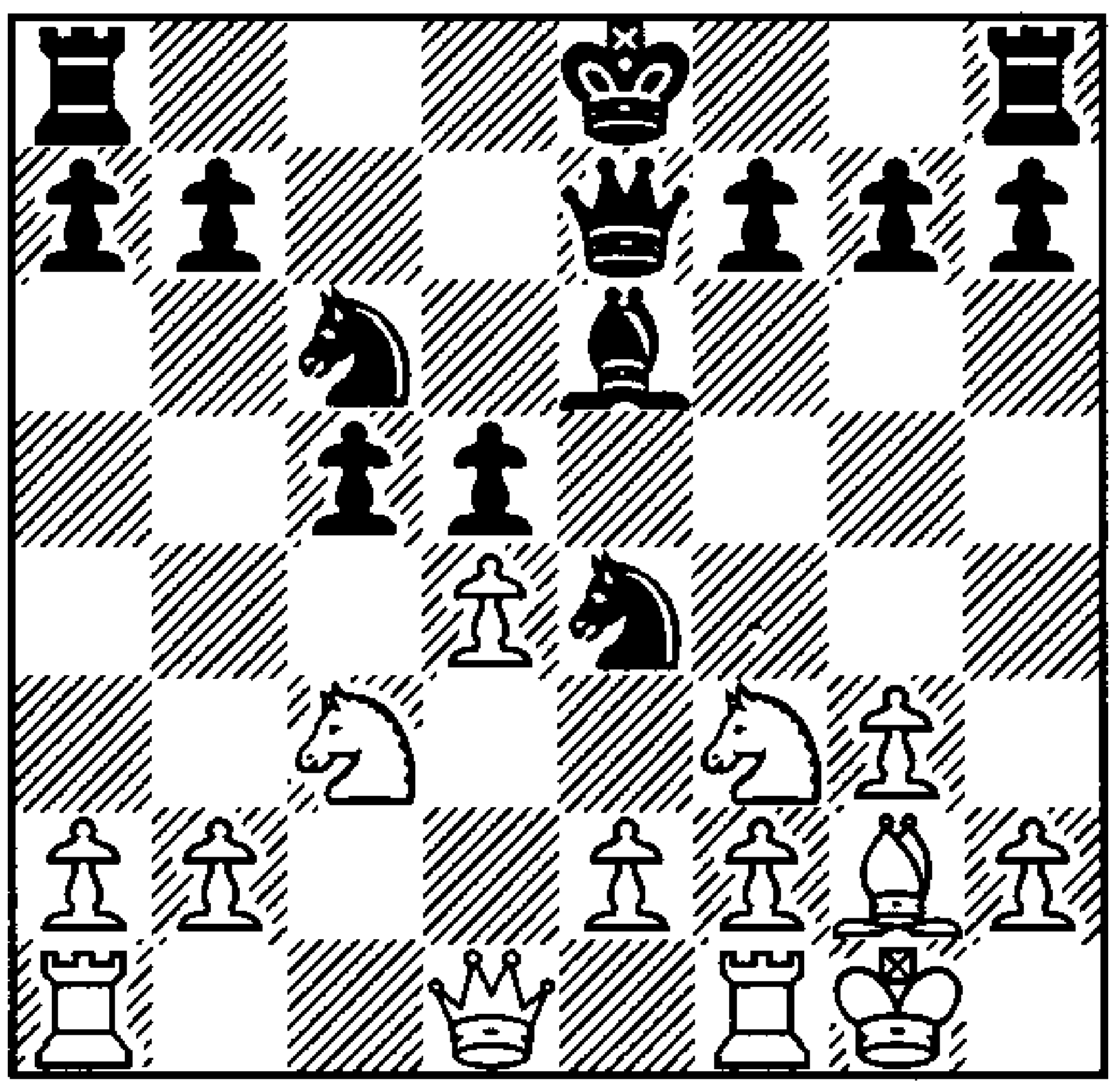
With the bishop at e6 this is an inaccuracy. Better is the modest 9 b3!? or the more rigid 9 dxc5 ♗xc5 10 ♘a4! (to Bogoljubow's move 10 ♘g5 there is the simple reply 10...0-0) 10...♗e7 11 ♗e3 0-0 12 ♘d4 (Réti), with a slight but enduring advantage.

9...♘e4!

'A very good reply which frees Black's game. Before this game was played Rubinstein and Mieses had engaged in a series of games which were shown to me by some of my friends desirous of knowing my opinion with respect to them. I liked Mieses' ninth move 9...♘e4, and I decided to play it against Marshall, whom I hoped had not seen the games.' (Capablanca)

Incidentally, if instead of ...♗e6 Black has played ...0-0, the relieving manoeuvre 9...♘e4? is not possible, since after 10 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 the d5-pawn is hanging.

10 ♗xe7 ♕xe7



The first critical moment.

11 ♘e5?

In totally the wrong direction! This is a typical attempt by Marshall to initiate some unjustified tactics out of nothing. 'Of course, if 11 dxc5 ♘xc3 with an excellent game.' (Capablanca) But there are also normal moves – 11 e3 or 11 ♖c1.

Strangely enough, Marshall had already crushed Mieses with 11 ♖c1 (Berlin 3rd matchgame 1908): 11...♖d8?! 12 dxc5 ♘xc5 13 b4 ♘e4 14 b5 ♘a5 15 ♕d4 ♘xc3 16 ♕xc3 ♘c4 17 ♕xg7 etc. It is probable that he had in fact seen the game Rubinstein-Mieses (Frankfurt 2nd matchgame 1909), which went 11...♘xc3! 12 ♖xc3 c4 13 ♘e5 0-0 14 b3?! ♕b4 15 ♕d2 ♖ac8 16 ♖d1 b5 17 f4 ♘xe5 18 fxe5 a5 with equal chances. Rubinstein suggested 14 f4 with the idea of f4-f5 or e2-e4, but here too there is nothing terrible for Black: 14...f6! 15 ♘xc6 bxc6 16 e4 dxe4 17 ♗xe4 ♗d5 with equality.

11...♘xd4!

Simple and convincing. There is no need for 11...♘xc3 12 bxc3 ♘xe5 13 dxe5 0-0 (13...♕d7 14 f4 g6 15 e4!; 13...♖d8 14 ♕a4+) 14 ♗xd5 ♖ad8 15 e4 ♗xd5 (inferior is 15...♗h3?! 16 ♖e1 ♕xe5 17 ♕b3 b6 18 f4 ♕e7 19 a4 Tarrasch) 16 exd5 ♕xe5 17 c4 b5 18 ♖e1 ♕f5 with an unclear game.

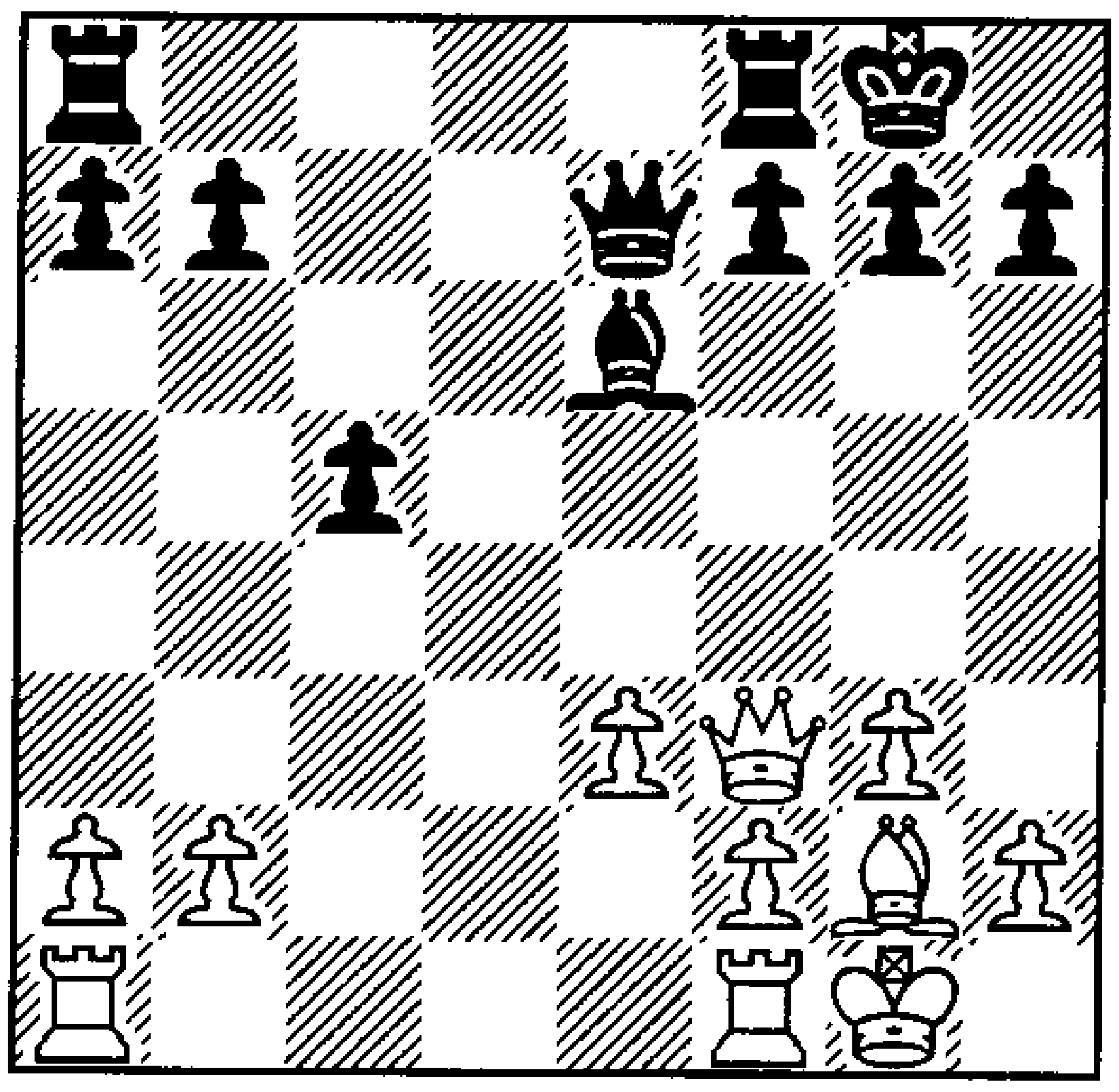
12 ♘xe4 dxe4 13 e3 (but not 13 ♗xe4? ♗h3 and wins) **13...♘f3+!**

Again the simplest. If 13...♘b5?, then 14 ♕a4 a6 15 ♕xe4.

14 ♘xf3

'Better would have been 14 ♗xf3 exf3 15 ♕a4+. I had the intention at the time to play 15...♔f8 against this check and not 15...♗d7?, which would have simplified the game, taking away all chances of winning.' (Capablanca) I agree: 15...♗d7 16 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 17 ♕e4+ ♕e7 18 ♕xf3 with equality. And after 15...♔f8! they recommended 16 ♖fd1, overlooking 16...g6! 17 ♘xf3 ♔g7 with an excellent game for Black.

14...exf3 15 ♕xf3 0-0!



16 ♖fc1

'Black has the better game, since White cannot play 16 ♕xb7 because of 16...♕xb7 17 ♗xb7 ♖ab8 followed by 18...♖xb2, holding all the lines and having a free pawn to boot, which should win.' (Capablanca) Panov and other commentators are of the same opinion, but in my opinion from the practical standpoint this was the surest way to save the game: 18 ♗g2 ♖xb2 19 ♖fc1! c4 20 ♗f1 ♖c8 21 ♖c3 with good drawing chances.

They all concertedly and rather dogmatically suggested immediately creating counterplay with 16 e4, then ♕e3 and f2-f4. But after 16...♖fd8 17 ♕e3 ♖d4! it is not clear if the white pawns will begin advancing, whereas the d-file is in Black's possession and the weaknesses in White's position are irreparable. For the moment the move in the game does not spoil anything: Marshall simply activates his rook, not yet suspecting what is awaiting him.

16...♖ab8 17 ♕e4 (with the idea of 18 ♗h3) **17...♕c7!**

Avoiding the exchange of bishops: Black's bishop is better!

18 ♖c3

Another myth: '18 f4 was better.' (Panov) This merely weakens White's position and after 18...♖fd8 his difficulties increase. He should not be advancing pawns, but defending!

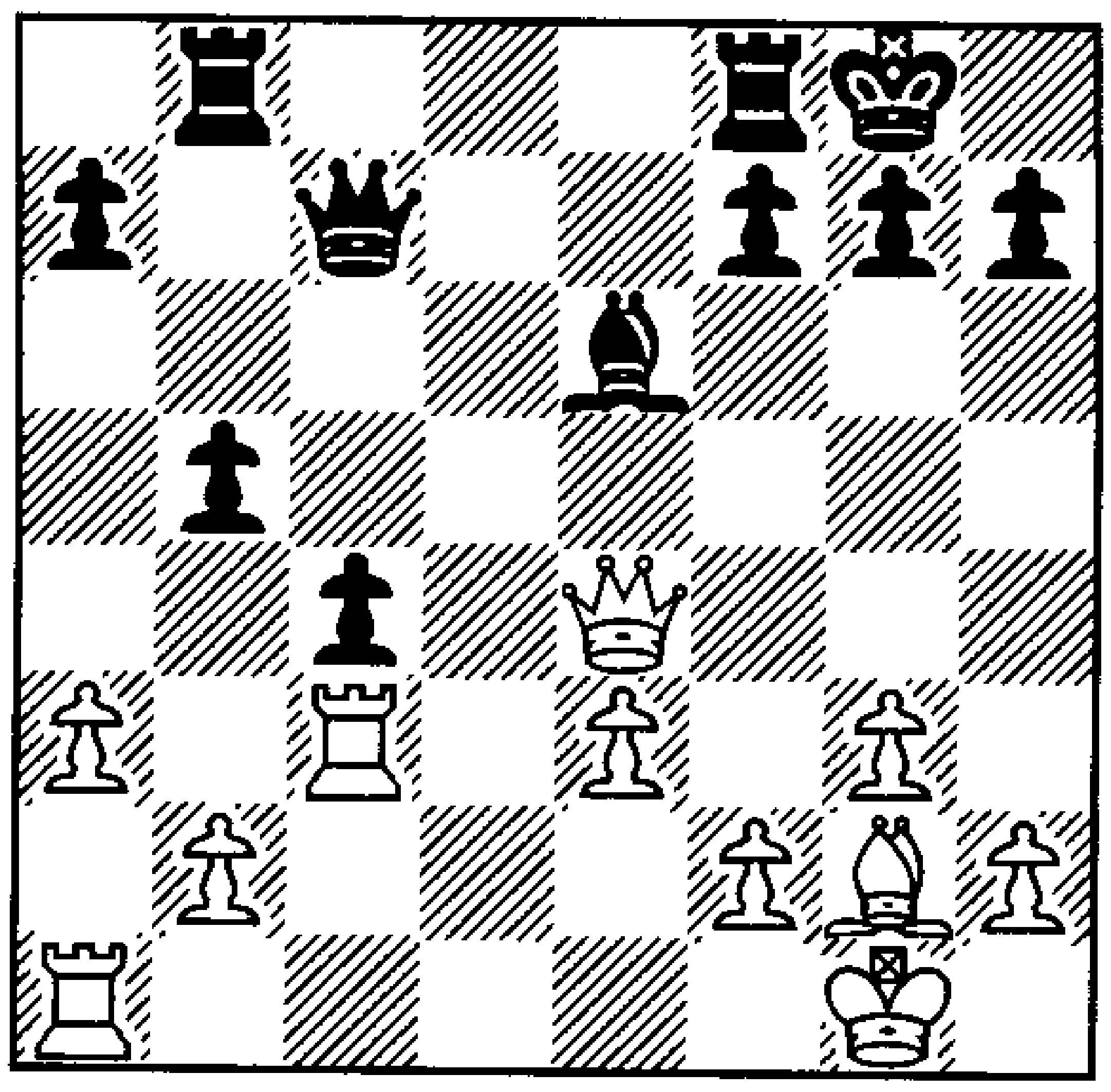
18...b5 19 a3

In my opinion, for a draw 19 b3!? was

nevertheless preferable. This is what modern masters would have played.

19...c4

Another micro-nuance. Capa exploits the unfortunate position of the rook at c3.

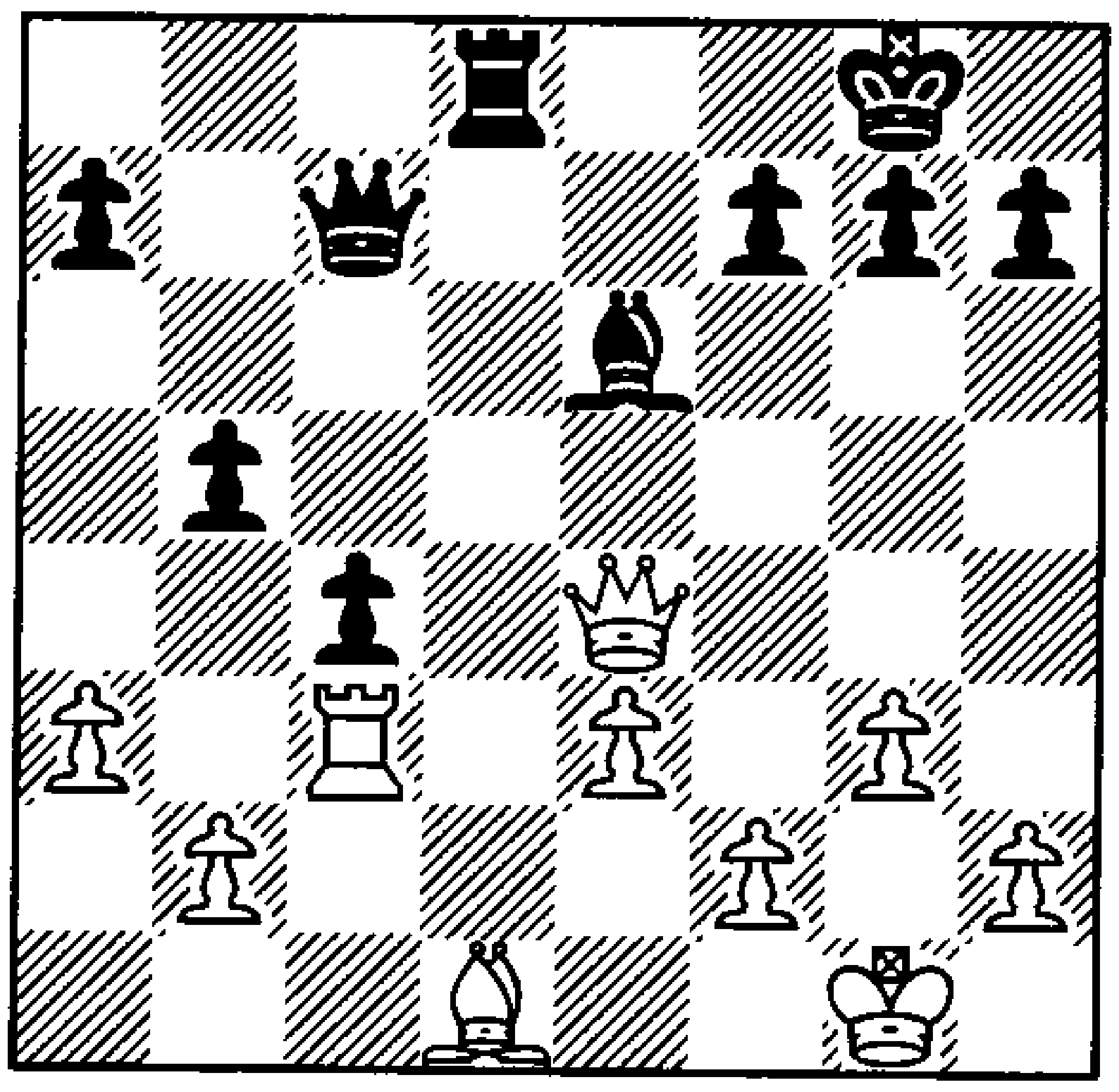


20 ♗f3?!

Also weak was 20 b3?! ♕a5! 21 b4 ♕c7. According to Lasker, 20 ♖d1 was necessary, and if 20...♖fd8 21 ♖cc1!, connecting the rooks. Black has a small plus, but there is nothing decisive.

Apparently Marshall was satisfied by the fact that Black's pawns were standing on squares of the colour of his bishop. But these pawns will soon begin advancing...

20...♖fd8 21 ♖d1 ♖xd1+ 22 ♗xd1 ♖d8



'Black now has full command of the board. His play is an example of how slight advantages should be utilised.' (Lasker)

Only seven moves of quiet play have passed, and strategically the game is already decided: Black has advanced his queenside pawns, while White has placed his rook offside and conceded the d-file. It is hard to imagine that the player with White was a recent challenger for the crown, a grandmaster from the world's top ten!

23 ♗f3 g6!

With the threat of 24...♗d5 25 ♕g4 h5. According to Steinitz and even Philidor, Black supposedly should have played ...h7-h6. But Capa subtly observed that in the given instance it was not a question of pawns on squares of the same colour as the bishop, but of the most harmonious arrangement of the forces, killing White's counterplay, since in any case things will be decided by a breakthrough on the queenside.

24 ♕c6 (24 ♖c2? ♗f5) **24...♕e5!**

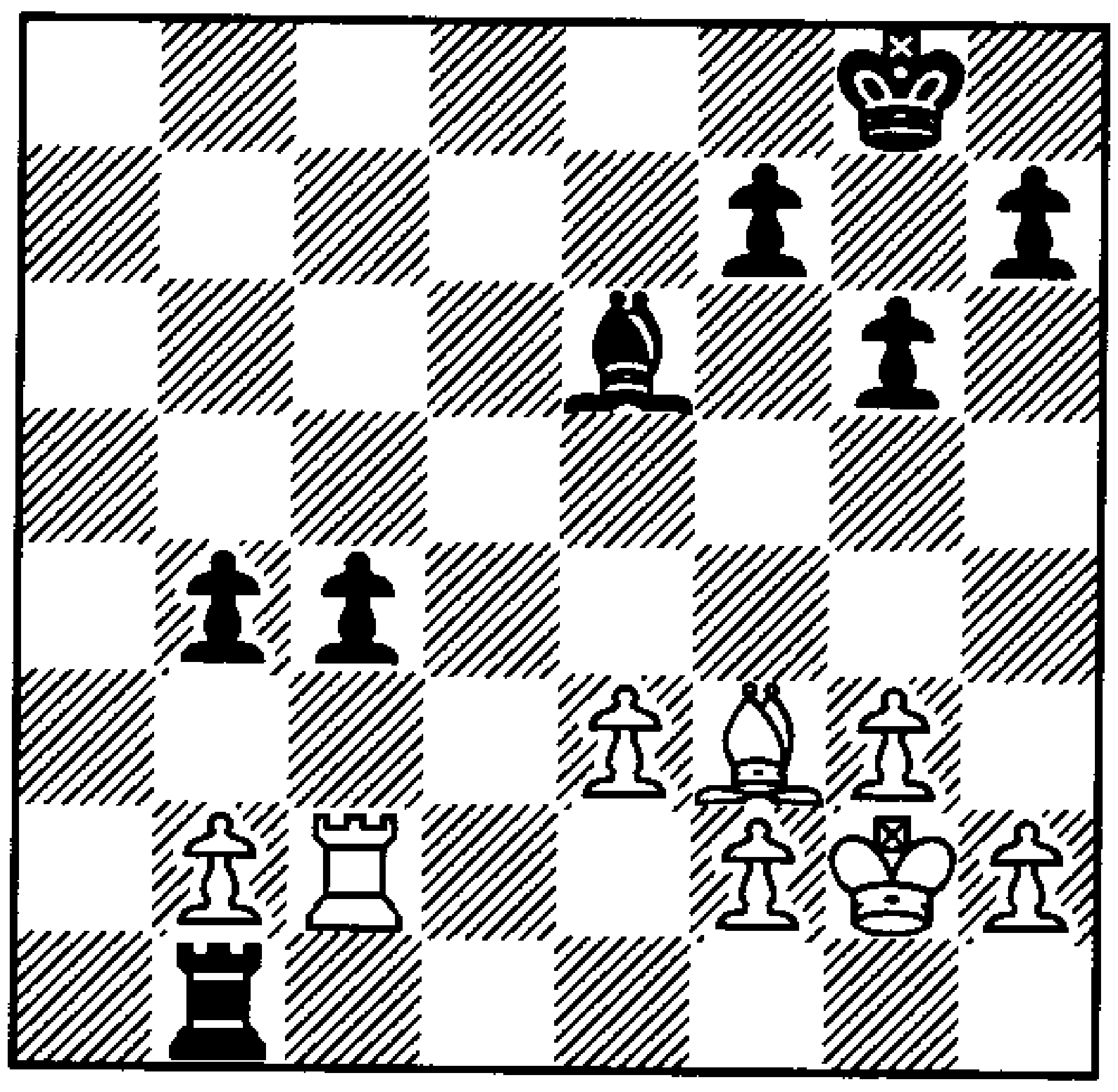
24...♕xc6 25 ♗xc6 a6 was also possible, but Black exchanges in a more favourable situation.

25 ♕e4 ♕xe4 26 ♗xe4 ♖d1+!

'Very important. Black must stop the approach of the white king by means of ♗c2 followed by ♔f1 etc.' (Capablanca)

27 ♔g2 a5 (setting about the creation of a passed pawn) **28 ♖c2 b4 29 axb4 axb4 30 ♗f3 ♖b1**

The last critical position, which is now bad for White: Black has achieved everything that he wanted.



31 ♗e2?

This loses the bishop! With 31 ♖d2 it was still possible to resist – at the least, some accuracy would have been required of Black: 31...♖a1! 32 ♗e2 ♖a2 33 ♔f1 c3 34 ♖d8+ ♔g7 35 bxc3 ♖a1+! 36 ♖d1 (or 36 ♔g2 bxc3 37 ♗d1 ♖a2) 36...♖xd1+ 37 ♗xd1 b3 winning. But now comes the Cuban's star turn – an elegant little combination.

31...b3! 32 ♖d2

If 32 ♖c3, then 32...♖xb2 33 ♗xc4 ♖c2!, also winning a piece.

32...♖c1! 33 ♗d1

Or 33 ♔f3 ♖c2 34 ♖d4 c3 35 bxc3 b2 36 ♖b4 ♗d5+ 37 e4 ♖xc3+ 38 ♔f4 ♗b3.

33...c3 34 bxc3 b2! 35 ♖xb2 (35 ♗c2? ♖xc2) **35...♖xd1 36 ♖c2 ♗f5 37 ♖b2 ♖c1 38 ♖b3 ♗e4+ 39 ♔h3 ♖c2 40 f4 h5**

'Threatening 41...♗f5+ followed by 42...♖xh2+ and 43...♔g7. The rest requires no further comment.' (Capablanca)

41 g4 hxg4+ 42 ♔xg4 ♖xh2 43 ♖b4 f5+ 44 ♔g3 ♖e2 45 ♖c4 ♖xe3+ 46 ♔h4 ♔g7 47 ♖c7+ ♔f6 48 ♖d7 ♗g2 49 ♖d6+ ♔g7 0-1

The simplicity with which Black promoted his pawn had a colossal influence on the minds of players. After this game many acquired a superstitious horror of a pawn majority on the queenside, as though it automatically gave an advantage. It was only many years later that this was disputed by Alekhine in a game with Yates (*Game No.116*), and he was proved right – every position should be approached concretely: A flank majority reigns in a technical endgame, where an outside passed pawn can be calmly created, but in positions of a middlegame type the central pawns may give serious counterplay or even an attack. But to make this step forward, it required an Alekhine...

And so, the novice won the match with the sensational score +8 -1 =14. In the USA he was christened 'the Cuban Morphy', and in Cuba he was greeted as a national hero. 'I can safely say that no player ever performed such a feat,' writes Capablanca without false modesty, 'as it was my first encounter against a master, and such a master, one of the first ten in the whole world. The most surprising feature of all was the fact that I played without having ever opened a book to study the openings; in fact, had Marshall played such things as Danish Gambits, Vienna Openings, or the like, the result might have been different. I certainly should have experienced more difficulty in obtaining such a result.'

In my view, it was not even the question of the score, but of the fact that Capa played a completely different type of chess. The games of the match show that, thanks to his incredible natural talent, he understood chess simply differently, on some level that was unknown to his opponent. This difference in understanding was the equivalent of at least two categories! Marshall was quite a good grandmaster; he played concretely, making sudden attacks, but without much of a feeling for position. But Capablanca thought in schemes, he saw plans, and used general conceptions, something that at the time was not accessible to many, only the chosen few – Lasker, Tarrasch, Schlechter, Rubinstein...

Now these few had been joined by Capablanca, and with the years he raised his positional understanding to perfection. He knew exactly which piece to place where, and it was as though he could see through a position. It was for this reason that the Cuban so rarely lost: there was hardly anyone who could win against him.

Drama in San Sebastian

Capablanca's debut in the world arena took place at the important international tournament in San Sebastian (1911), which attracted all the stars of those times, apart from Lasker, the current world champion, and Alekhine, who was as yet too young. Playing here were the chief contender for the throne, the incomparable Rubinstein, and all the participants in the recent matches for the world championship – Schlechter, Janowski, Tarrasch, Marshall... They invited only masters who had at least twice taken fourth prize or better in tournaments during the previous decade. The only exception was made for the 22-year-old Capa – in view of his impressive victory in his match with Marshall.

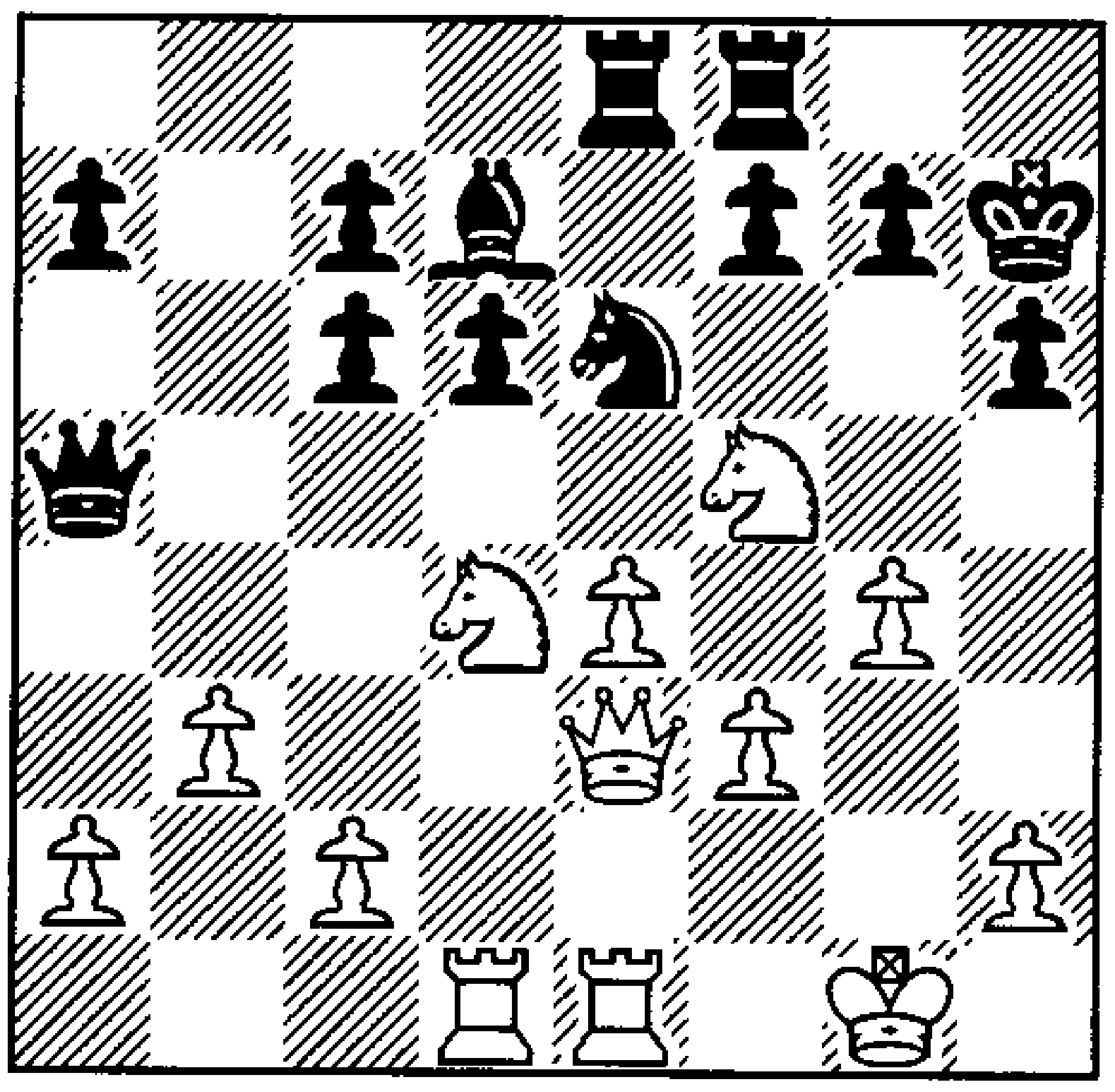
'Some of the masters,' Capablanca later recalled, 'objected to my entry before this clause was known. One of them was Dr Bernstein. I had the good fortune to play him in the first round, and beat him in such fashion as to obtain the Rothschild prize for the most brilliant game of the tournament.'

(Something similar happened many years later at the strong tournament in Banja Luka 1979. The venerable participants expressed their displeasure over the invitation to the 16-year-old Baku schoolboy Kasparov, who did not hold an international title. The most indignant was grandmaster Vukic. It need hardly be said that he shared Bernstein's fate...)

Game 76

J.R.Capablanca-O.Bernstein

San Sebastian 1911, 1st round



22 ♘e2?!

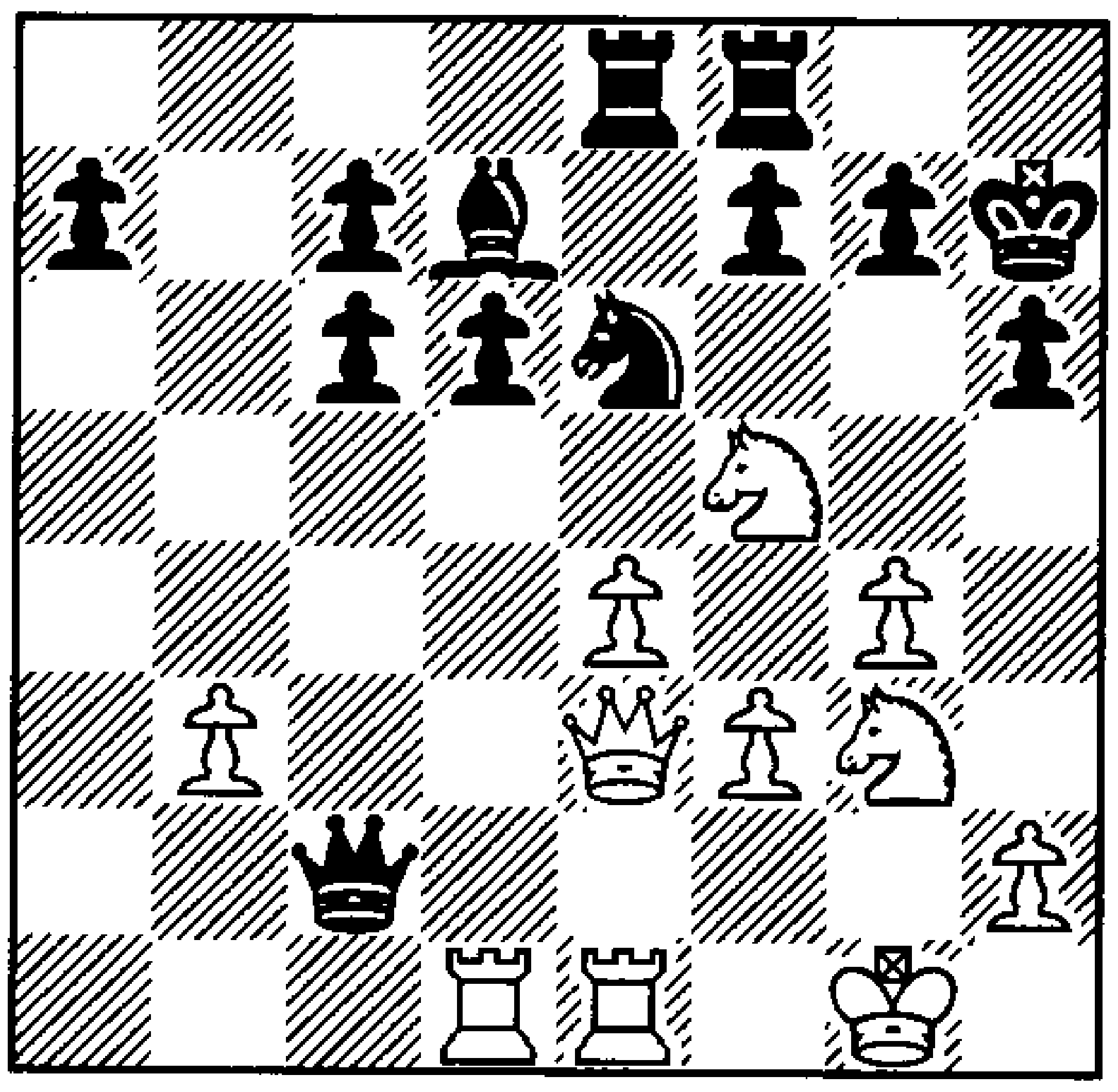
A purely intuitive sacrifice of the a2-pawn for the sake of an attack on the king. All the commentators, beginning with Capablanca, considered the sacrifice to be more than correct, but whether it was in fact we will now see. I think that by around the year 1925 the Cuban would no longer have played 22 ♘e2?!...

22...♕xa2!?

Of course, 22...♕b6 was quieter – perhaps after 23 ♔g2 ♕xe3 24 ♘xe3 White has a small plus, but this still has to be demonstrated. As Capa proudly writes, 'I can say, because of the conversation that I had at the time with Dr Bernstein, that he had not the slightest idea of what was coming. He is not much to be blamed, however, because the combination involved is very deep and difficult to foresee.' However, nowadays such a pawn would probably be taken not only by a Korchnoi: indeed, for the moment nothing concrete for White is apparent.

23 ♘eg3 ♕xc2

But here they all attach a question mark. According to Lasker, 23...f6!? 24 ♘h5 ♖f7 was necessary. I agree that this is not bad, especially as after the sharp 25 ♘xh6 gxh6 26 ♕c3 ♕a3 27 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 28 ♕xf6 ♕c5+ 29 ♔h1 ♘g7 there is nothing terrible for Black. But what if the capture on c2 should also prove useful?!

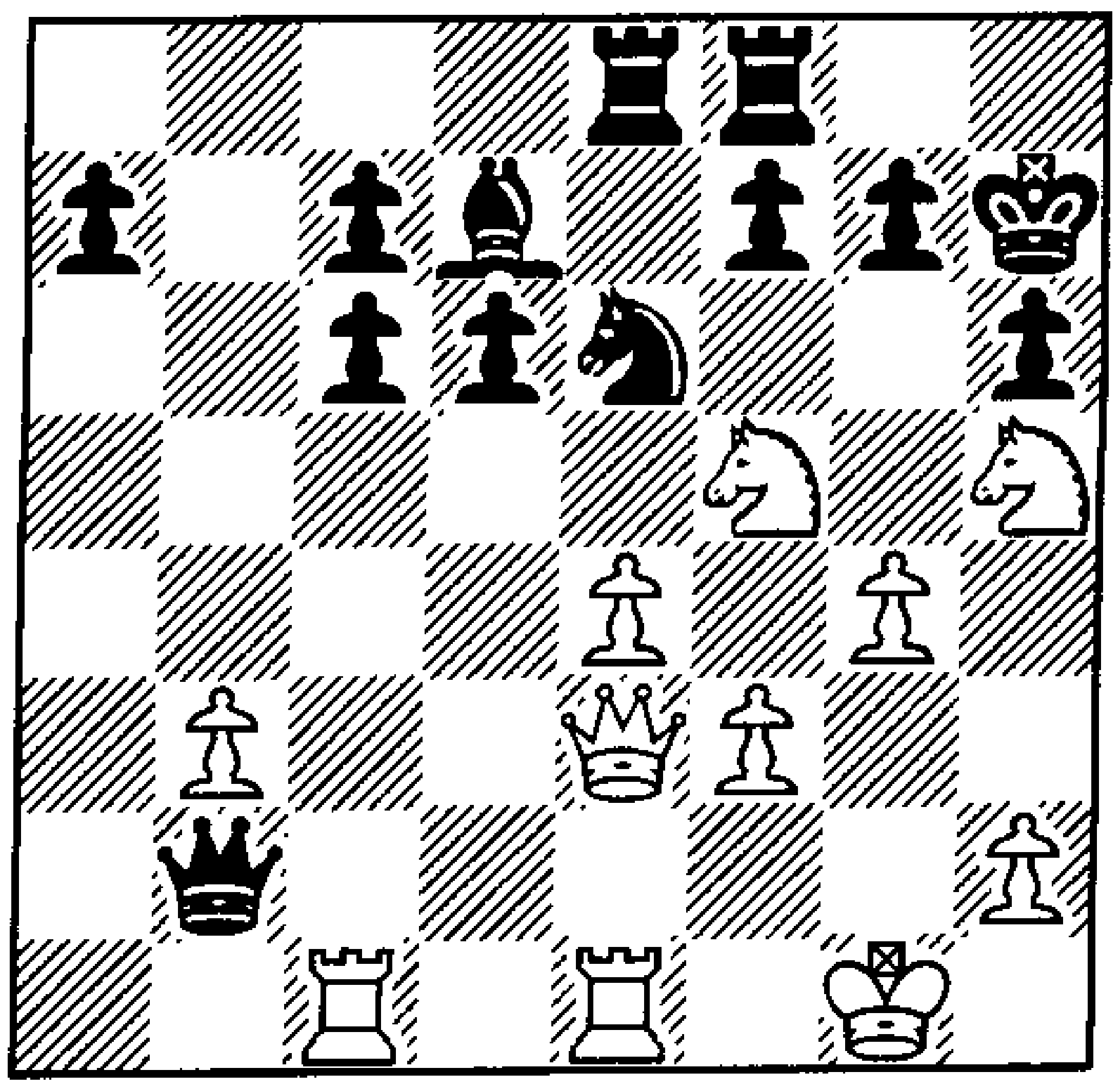


24 ♖c1

Parrying the threat of ...♕c5. Bearing in mind the difficulties that White could have faced in the game, I would suggest the unclear 24 ♘h5 ♕c5 25 e5! (but not 25 ♕xc5 ♘xc5 26 ♘fxg7? ♖b8!) 25...♕xe3+ 26 ♖xe3 ♘c5 27 ♘fxg7!?

24...♕b2 25 ♘h5

'The march of this knight is most remarkable. Even now it looks inoffensive, and yet it is this knight that is going to decide the game.' (Capablanca) But only because of Black's weak play!



25...♖h8?

'There was nothing better (*?? – G. K.*). If 25...g6 26 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 27 e5 gxh5 28 gxh5 and White wins because there is no way to stop one of the rooks from checking in the open g-file (*28...♕xb3 29 ♖e2 and ♖g2+ – G. K.*). If 25...g5 26 e5 f6 27 ♕d3, and with proper play White will win. I do not give the variations because they are very long and complicated.' (Capablanca)

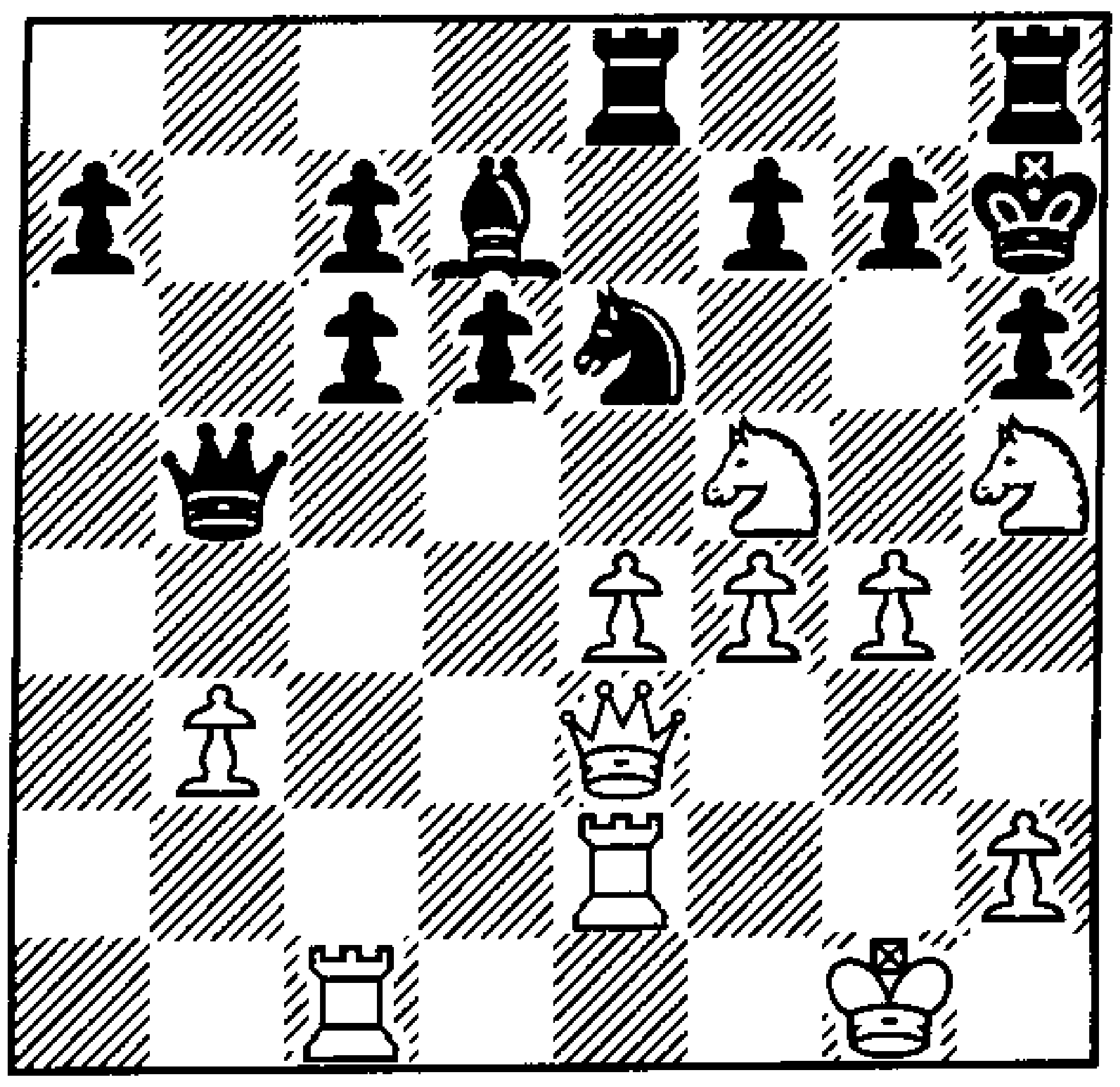
A typical comment: the third world champion did not greatly favour long and complicated variations! Yet no one has shown how after 25...g5!? 26 e5 f6 27 ♕d3 ♔h8! White wins. But what is more important – no one has shown what he is to do after 26...♘f4! (instead of 26...f6), for example: 27 ♘xf4 ♖xe5 28 ♘d3 ♖xe3 29 ♘xb2 ♖xb3 with an excellent game for Black.

I should add that even after the more restrained 25...♖g8!? 26 ♖e2 (26 ♘hxg7?! ♖xg7 27 ♕xh6+ ♔g8) 26...♕e5 27 f4 ♕b5 28 ♘fxg7?! ♖xg7 29 ♘f6+ ♔h8 30 f5 ♘g5 the only question is whether White can save the game.

There's the 'deep combination' for you... To be objective, I should mention that most of the grandmasters of that time did not defend any better than Bernstein, and therefore Capa's risky fantasies, which with the years became increasingly rare, were something that he usually got away with.

26 ♖e2 ♕e5 27 f4 ♕b5

The queen is shut off from the defence of the kingside, and the unfortunate position of the rook at h8 allows White to land a veiled blow.



28 ♘fxg7! ♘c5?

Another mistake, apparently due to time-trouble. Capablanca expected 28...♘xg7 29 ♘f6+ ♔g6 30 ♘xd7 f6! (the spectacular 31 f5+ ♔h7 32 ♘f6 mate! was threatened) 31 e5! ♔f7 32 ♘xf6 ♖e7 33 ♘e4, 'and Black's position is untenable'.

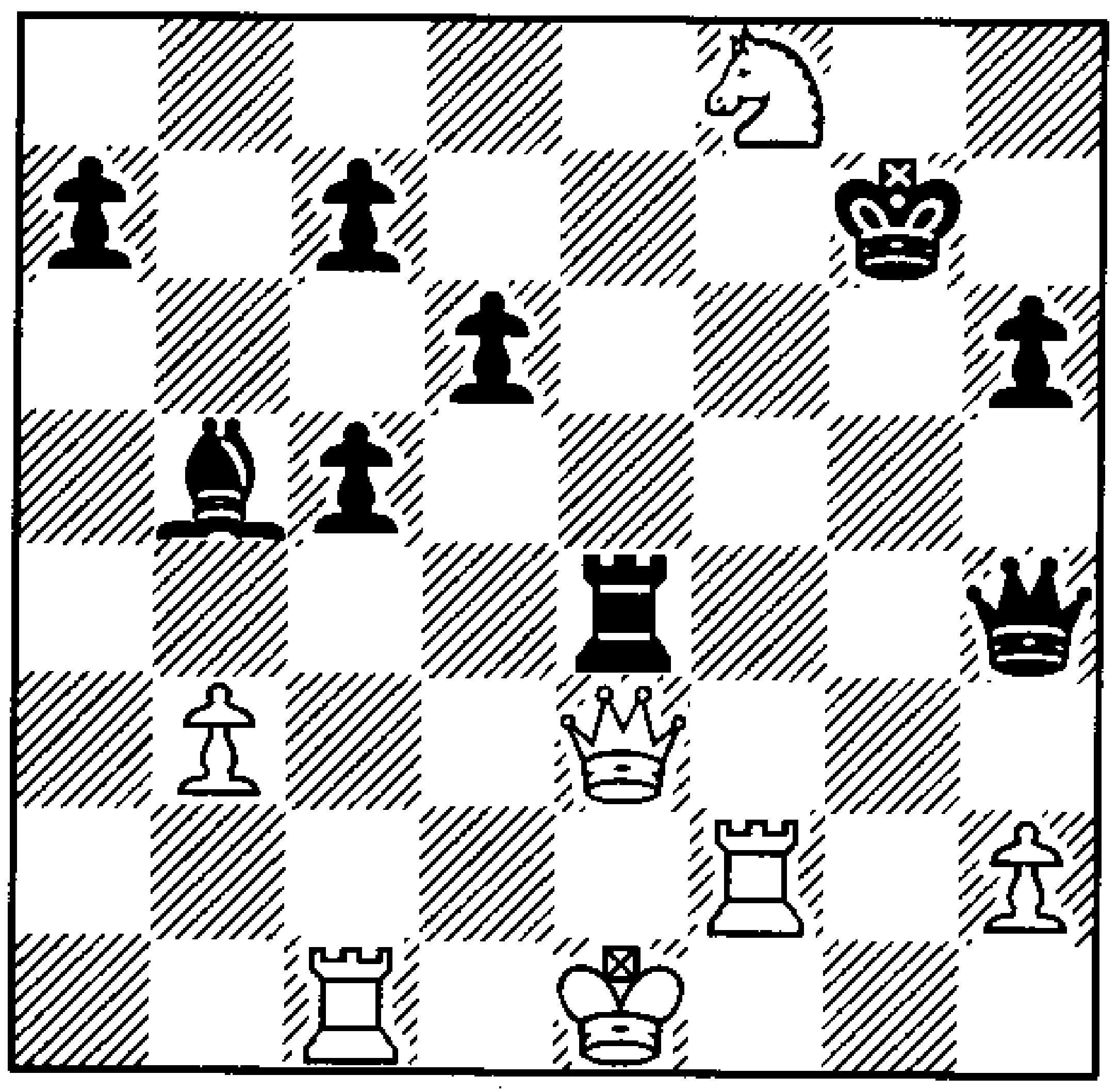
It is a pity that he did not examine the cool defence 28...♖d8! In this case, as Panov writes, 'by 29 f5 ♘f8 (29...♘xg7?? 30 ♘f6 mate; *29...♘c5 30 g5! ♕d3 31 g6+! – G. K.*) 30 e5! White would have gained an irresistible attack: 30...♕xe5 31 ♕d2! ♕b5 32 ♕b2 ♖g8 33 ♘f6+ ♔xg7 34 ♘xd7+ ♔h7 35 ♘f6+ ♔h8 36 ♖e7, or 30...♖g8 31 e6 fxe6 32 fxe6 ♘xe6 33 ♕e4+! ♔h8 34 ♘xe6 ♕xh5 (34...♗xe6? 35 ♕xe6 ♕xh5 36 ♕f6+ ♔h7 37 ♖e7+) 35 ♖g2.' However, this last variation needs to be continued and improved:

1) 35...♗xe6 36 gxh5 ♖xg2+ 37 ♕xg2 (37 ♔xg2? ♗d5) 37...♖g8 38 ♕xg8+ ♔xg8 39 ♖xc6 (39 b4 ♗d5 40 ♖a1 c5) 39...♗xb3 40 ♖xc7 leads to an endgame with rook against

bishop, where the win for White, if there is one at all, requires a separate analysis;

2) 35...♕e8 36 ♕d4+ ♔h7 37 ♘xd8 ♕xd8 38 ♕d3+ ♔h8 39 h3 with the better position for White, but one that is still far from won.

Therefore I tried to improve his play with 33 ♘xe6!? (instead of 33 ♕e4+). The computer quickly produced a fantastic variation, unexpectedly confirming Capablanca's self-advertising words, that 'this combination taken as a whole is one of the longest and most difficult ever played over the board': 33...♖xg4+ 34 ♔f1 ♕xh5 (34...♕f5+ 35 ♖f2 ♕xe6 36 ♘f6+ ♔g6 37 ♘xg4 wins) 35 ♘xd8 c5! 36 ♖f2! ♗b5+ 37 ♔e1 ♕h4 38 ♘e6 ♖e4 39 ♘f8+ ♔g7.



Analysis diagram

Black would appear to have sufficient attack for the rook but... 40 ♔d2!! ♕g4! (40...♖xe3 41 ♖g1+) 41 ♕c3+ ♔g8 42 ♕g3 ♕xg3 43 hxg3 ♔g7 44 ♖e1 wins.

In addition, White can consider 29 ♘f5!? (instead of 29 f5) 29...♕b6 30 ♖a1 with a serious initiative, even without the queens: 30...a5 (30...♘c5? 31 ♔h1 ♗xf5 32 ♕c3! ♖hg8 33 ♘f6+ ♔h8 34 ♘xg8+ ♔xg8 35 gxf5 wins) 31 ♔g2 ♕xe3 32 ♖xe3 c5 33 ♘e7 etc.

29 ♘xe8 ♗xe8 30 ♕c3 f6

No better was 30...♖g8 31 ♘f6+ ♔g7 32 ♖e3, or 30...♘e6 31 ♘f6+ ♔g6 (31...♔g7 32 ♘xe8+) 32 f5+ ♔g5 33 h4+ ♔xh4 34 ♖h2+ ♔g5 35 ♖h5+ with a rapid mate.

31 ♘xf6+ ♔g6 32 ♘h5 ♖g8 33 f5+ ♔g5 ('forgetting' to resign) **34 ♕e3+ ♔h4 35 ♕g3+ 1-0**

35...♔g5 36 h4 mate!

After this win Capa gained respect and he was no longer regarded as easy prey. But even so in this, his first international tournament, and such a strong one at that, the Cuban did not feel altogether confident. Later he recalled that it was rather terrible for him in the company of the strongest players in Europe: the debutant was all the time fearful that they would make moves that he had not anticipated.

And although he started with 3 out of 4, in his game with Janowski, one of the most experienced fighters, his fears were confirmed. Capablanca later admitted: 'In this game I was for the first time in my life to have the feeling of being completely outplayed by my opponent; time after time, up to my twenty-third move, I would figure some reply of my adversary only to find out immediately that I was wrong, and that some other move that he had made was superior to the one I had thought best.'

Game 77

J.R.Capablanca-D.Janowski

San Sebastian 1911, 5th round

Queen's Gambit D40

1 d4 d5 2 e3 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 c4 e6 5 ♘c3 ♗e7

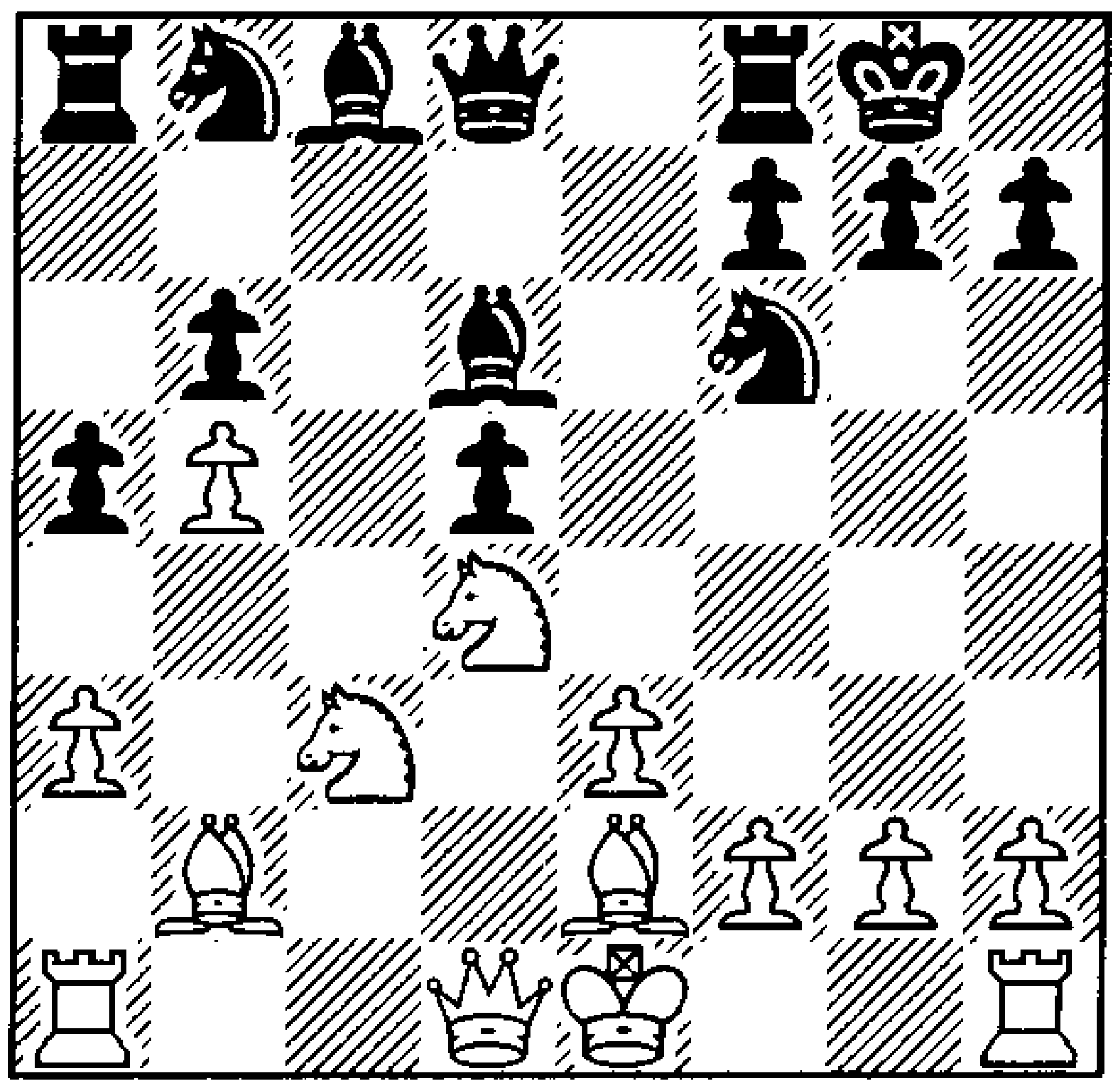
5...dxc4 or 5...♘c6 is usually played, but Janowski 'wanted to induce White to give up his centre pawn while keeping his own on d5.' (Ed. Lasker)

6 dxc5 0-0 7 a3 (7 cxd5! is more accurate) **7...♗xc5 8 b4 ♗e7** (8...♗d6!?) **9 ♗b2 a5!? 10 b5**

Of course, not 10 c5? b6!

10...b6 11 cxd5 exd5 12 ♘d4 ♗d6 13 ♗e2

'I saw at the time that 13 g3 seemed the proper continuation, but I became afraid of being criticised for creating such a formation of pawns on the kingside.' (Capablanca) According to Edward Lasker, then 13...♗g4! is a good reply. Even so, I think that after 14 f3 ♗e6 15 ♔f2 ♖a7 16 ♗e2 White has quite a favourable position.



13...♗e6 14 ♗f3?!

Of course, 14 0-0 was better, not weakening the c4-square. In a complicated, non-standard position where both sides have weaknesses, playing merely on general considerations, 'by eye', does not work!

14...♖a7! 15 0-0 ♖c7 16 ♕b3?!

A blank shot. 16 ♕d2 or 16 ♖c1 was more solid, but not 16 ♘xd5? ♘xd5 17 ♗xd5 ♗xh2+! 18 ♔xh2 ♕h4+ 19 ♔g1 ♗xd5 20 ♘f3 ♗xf3 21 ♕xf3 ♖c5 etc.

16...♘bd7! 17 ♖fd1

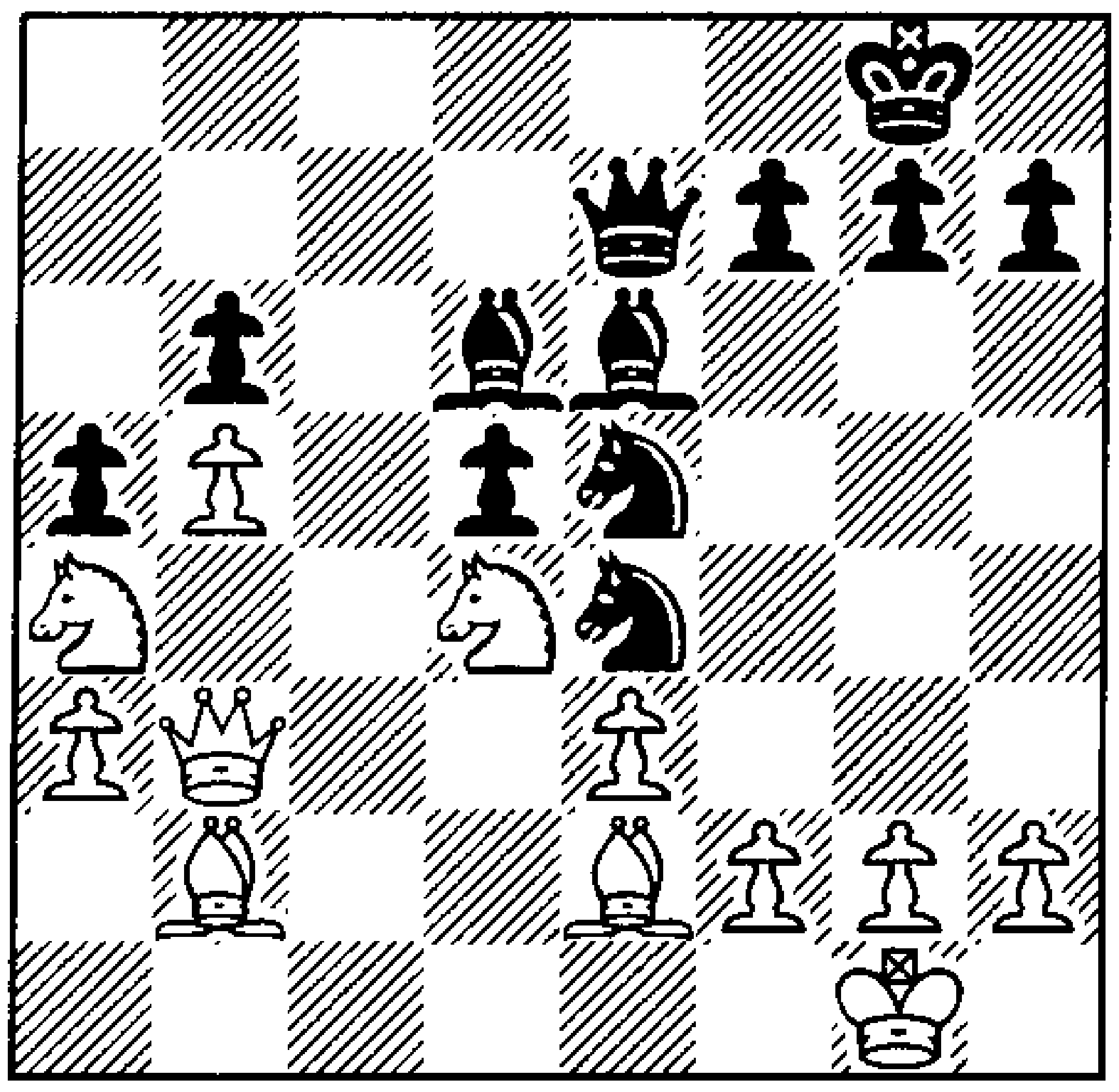
As is easily verified, 17 ♘xd5? and 17 ♘c6? both lose material.

17...♘e5! 18 ♗e2

And in this position the capture with 18 ♗xd5? is well met by 18...♖xc3 which is good for Black.

18...♕e7 19 ♖ac1 ♖fc8! 20 ♘a4 ♖xc1 21 ♖xc1 ♖xc1+ 22 ♗xc1 ♘e4! 23 ♗b2

'I had already seen what was coming, but I also felt sure that my only chance was to weather the storm. Perhaps either 23 f3 or 23 ♘xe6 followed by 24 f3 would have held the game, but, at any rate, Black had an advantage.' (Capablanca) Only not 23 ♘xb6? ♕c7!



23...♘c4! 24 ♗xc4

If 24 ♘xe6? with even more force there would have followed 24...♗xh2+! 25 ♔xh2 ♕h4+ 26 ♔g1 ♕xf2+ 27 ♔h2 ♕g3+ 28 ♔h1 ♘xe3 winning.

24...♗xh2+!

'The crisis is at hand! With this bishop sacrifice Janowski tears down his opponent's defences. Incidentally, he gains enough pawns to compensate him for the piece, should Capablanca succeed in getting his king away to safety.' (Ed. Lasker) 'This sacrifice is excellent, inasmuch as Black can, at least, draw the game by perpetual check. 24...dxc4 would not have been good, because White would then play 25 ♕c2 and have, at least, an even game.' (Capablanca)

25 ♔xh2 ♕h4+ 26 ♔g1 ♕xf2+ 27 ♔h2 ♕g3+!

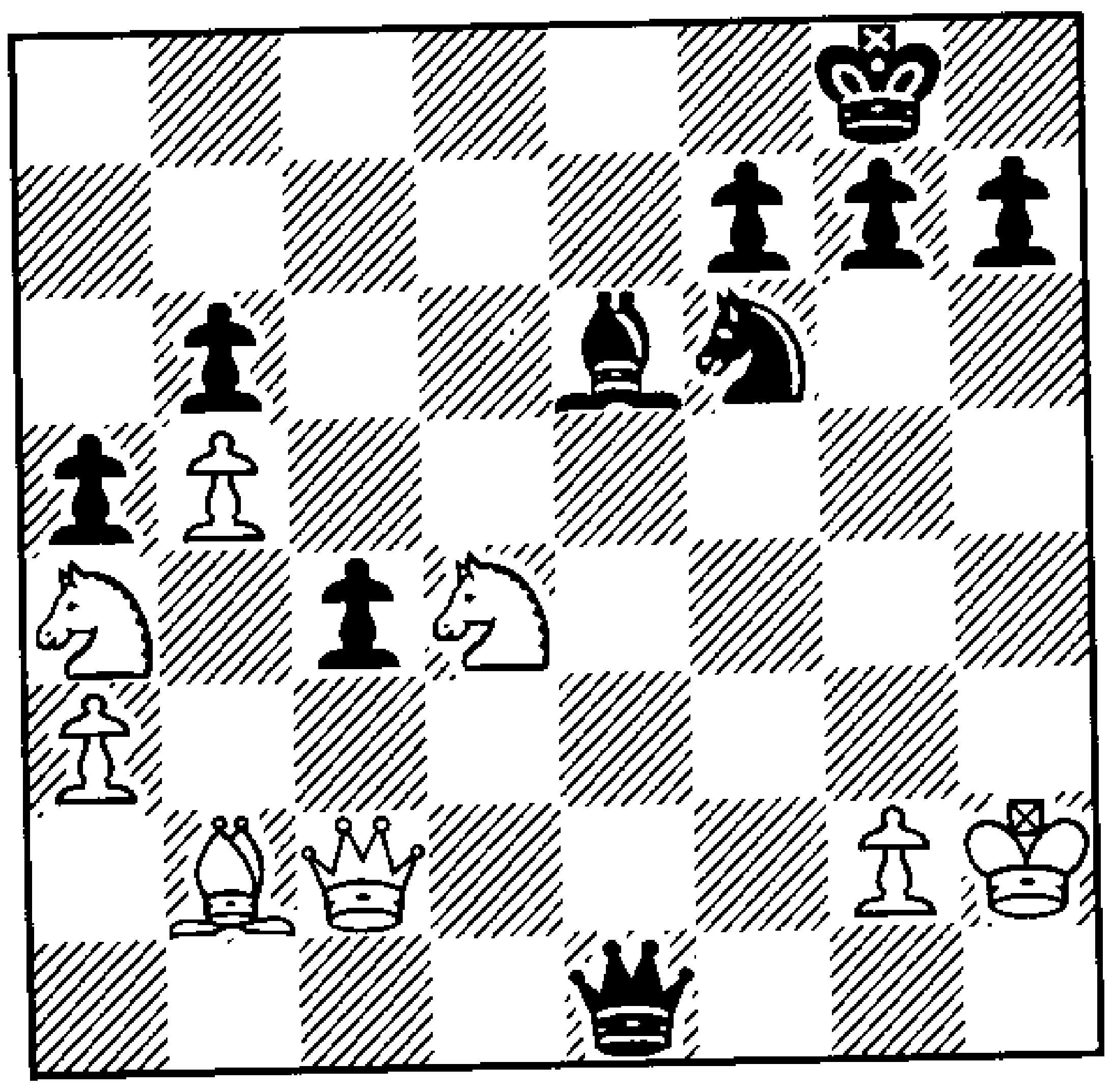
Much less clear was 27...dxc4 28 ♕c2 ♘d2 29 ♕d1 ♗d5 (29...♘f1+ 30 ♔h1 ♗d5 31 ♘f3 ♘xe3 32 ♕g1!, and there remains only 31...♘g3+ 32 ♔h2 ♘f1+ with perpetual check) 30 ♕g4 ♘f1+ 31 ♔h3 ♗b7 32 ♘f5 g6 33 ♗d4.

28 ♔g1 (but not 28 ♔h1? ♘f2+ 29 ♔g1 ♗h3 30 ♗xd5 ♘g4 31 ♗xf7+ ♔h8) **28...dxc4 29 ♕c2 ♕xe3+ 30 ♔h2 ♕h6+ 31 ♔g1 ♕e3+ 32 ♔h2 ♕g3+**

Checks to gain time on the clock.

33 ♔g1 ♕e1+ 34 ♔h2 ♘f6!

An excellent resource – the temporary sacrifice of a second piece!



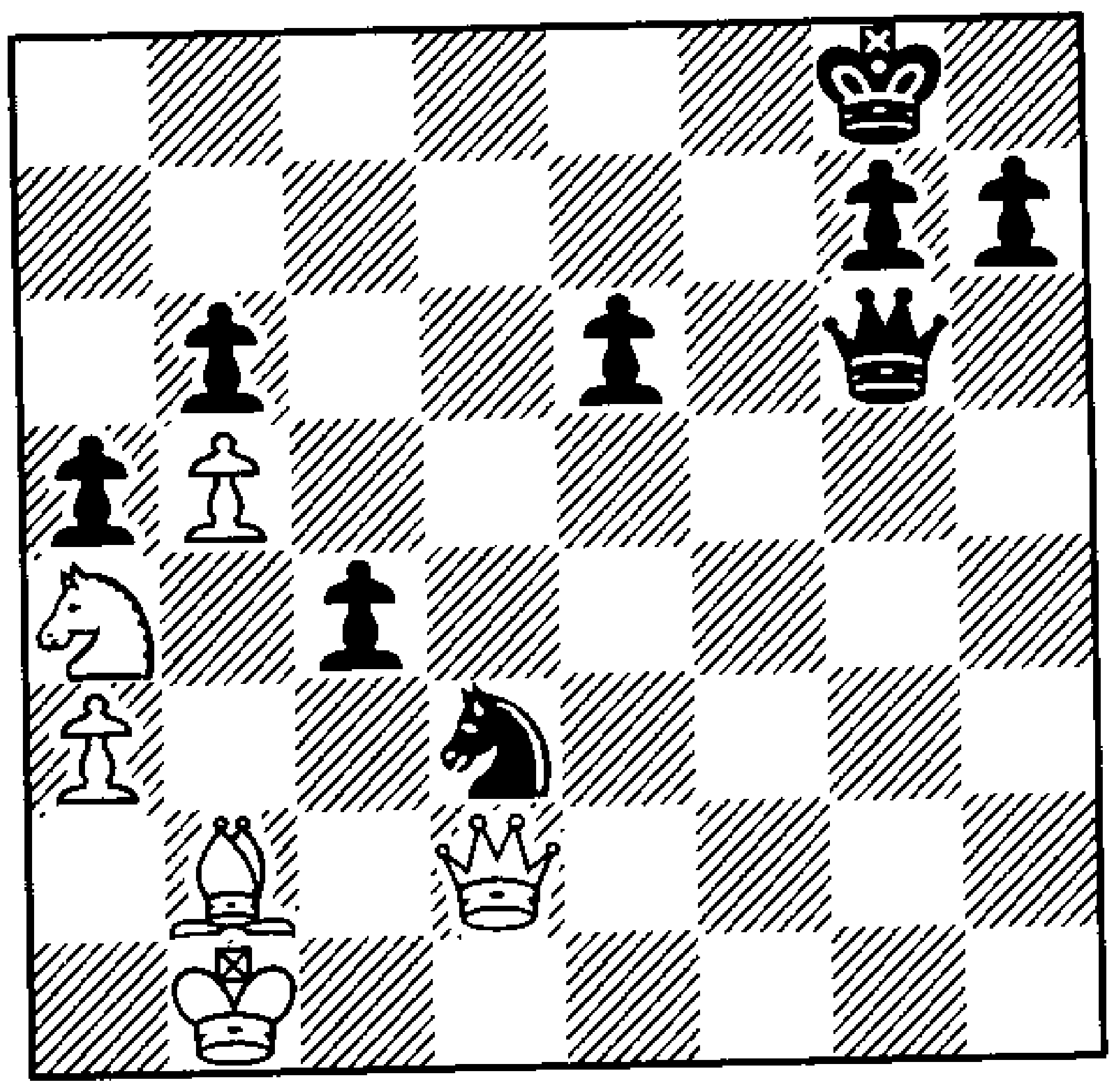
35 ♘xe6

In the light of White's subsequent difficulties, probably more tenacious was a continuation not mentioned by anyone: 35 ♕e2!? ♘g4+ 36 ♔h3 ♕h1+ 37 ♔g3.

35...♕h4+ 36 ♔g1 ♕e1+ 37 ♔h2 ♕h4+ 38 ♔g1 ♘g4 39 ♕d2!

The only move. If 39 g3 (39 ♕c3?? ♕f2+ 40 ♔h1 ♕f1 mate), then 39...♕xg3+ 40 ♕g2 ♕e1+ 41 ♕f1 ♕xe6 42 ♕f4 h5! etc.

39...♕h2+ 40 ♔f1 ♕h1+ 41 ♔e2 ♕xg2+ 42 ♔d1 ♘f2+ 43 ♔c2 ♕g6+ 44 ♔c1 ♕g1+ 45 ♔c2 ♕g6+ 46 ♔c1 ♘d3+ 47 ♔b1 fxe6



48 ♕c2

'In his book *My Chess Career*, Capablanca makes the statement that at this point he could have at least drawn the game with 48 ♔a2 [48 ♘xb6? ♕g1+], but after 48...♕f5! White would have been as badly off as in the line which he actually chose.' (Ed. Lasker) Indeed, after 49 ♕e3 ♘xb2 50 ♘xb2 ♕d5 51 ♔b1 c3 White's position is unenviable.

48...h5! 49 ♗d4

49 ♕xc4?! (49 ♘xb6? ♕g1+ and ...♕xb6) 49...h4! 50 ♘xb6 (50 ♕xh4? ♘b4+) 50...h3 51 ♕c8+ ♔h7 52 ♘d7 does not work in view of 52...♕f5! (but not 52...♘c5+? 53 ♔a2 ♘xd7 54 ♕xd7 h2 55 ♕d1 drawing) 53 ♘f8+ ♔h6 54 ♘xe6 ♘c5+ 55 ♔a1 (55 ♔a2 ♕xe6+!) 55...♕f1+ 56 ♔a2 ♕c4+ 57 ♔b1 (57 ♔a1 ♘b3+) 57...♕e4+! 58 ♔a1 ♕e1+! 59 ♔a2 ♕xe6+ 60 ♕xe6+ ♘xe6 61 b6 ♘c5 62 ♗e5 g5 and Black wins.

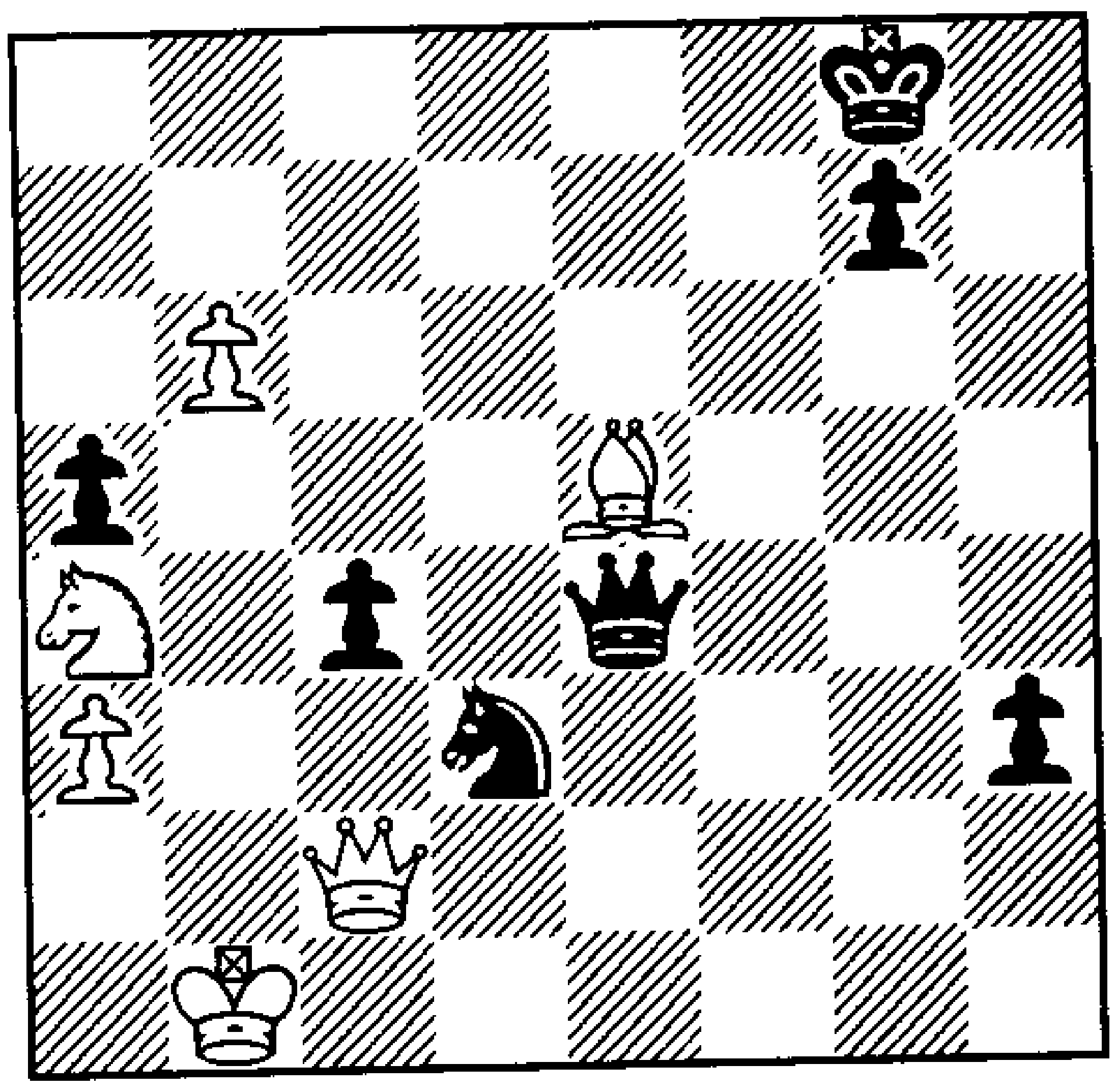
49...h4 50 ♗xb6 h3 51 ♗c7 e5! 52 b6

'All this from move forty-eight on, is the result of the analysis during adjournment... It was not good... Here 52 ♕xc4+ ♔f8 53 ♗d6+ ♕xd6 54 ♕c8+ and 55 ♕xh3 would have given a better chance for a draw.' (Capablanca) Let us see how much better: 54...♔e7! 55 ♕xh3 ♕xa3 56 ♕h4+ ♔d7 57 ♘b6+ (57 ♕h3+ ♔d6 or 57 ♕g4+ ♔d8 58 ♕g5+ ♕e7) 57...♔c7 58 ♘d5+ ♔b7 with a simple win.

52...♕e4!

'This move I had not properly considered, though it was the only one to win. Against 52...♕c6 I had 53 ♘c3, and in the same way I believe there would be a defence against any other move.' (Capablanca)

53 ♗xe5



After 53 ♘c3 (53 ♘b2 h2! 54 ♕xh2 ♘b4+ 55 ♔c1 ♘a2+) Black would have won with

53...h2! 54 ♘xe4 (54 ♕xh2? ♕e1+ 55 ♔a2 ♕xc3) 54...h1♕+ 55 ♔a2 ♕xe4 56 ♔b1! (56 b7? ♘b4+!) 56...♕d5! followed by ...e5-e4 and ...g7-g5.

53...♕e1+??

'It was a tragedy in Janowski's life that he did not bring this brilliant game to a fitting conclusion with 53...♕h1+!, followed by ...♘xe5 and ...♕g2.' (Ed. Lasker)

There comes to mind an ancient chess aphorism: lucky, like the first prize winner! 'Janowski should not, however, be much blamed for it, as previous to this fault he had conducted the game as in the old days, when he was one of the most feared of all the players,' the happy winner praised his opponent.

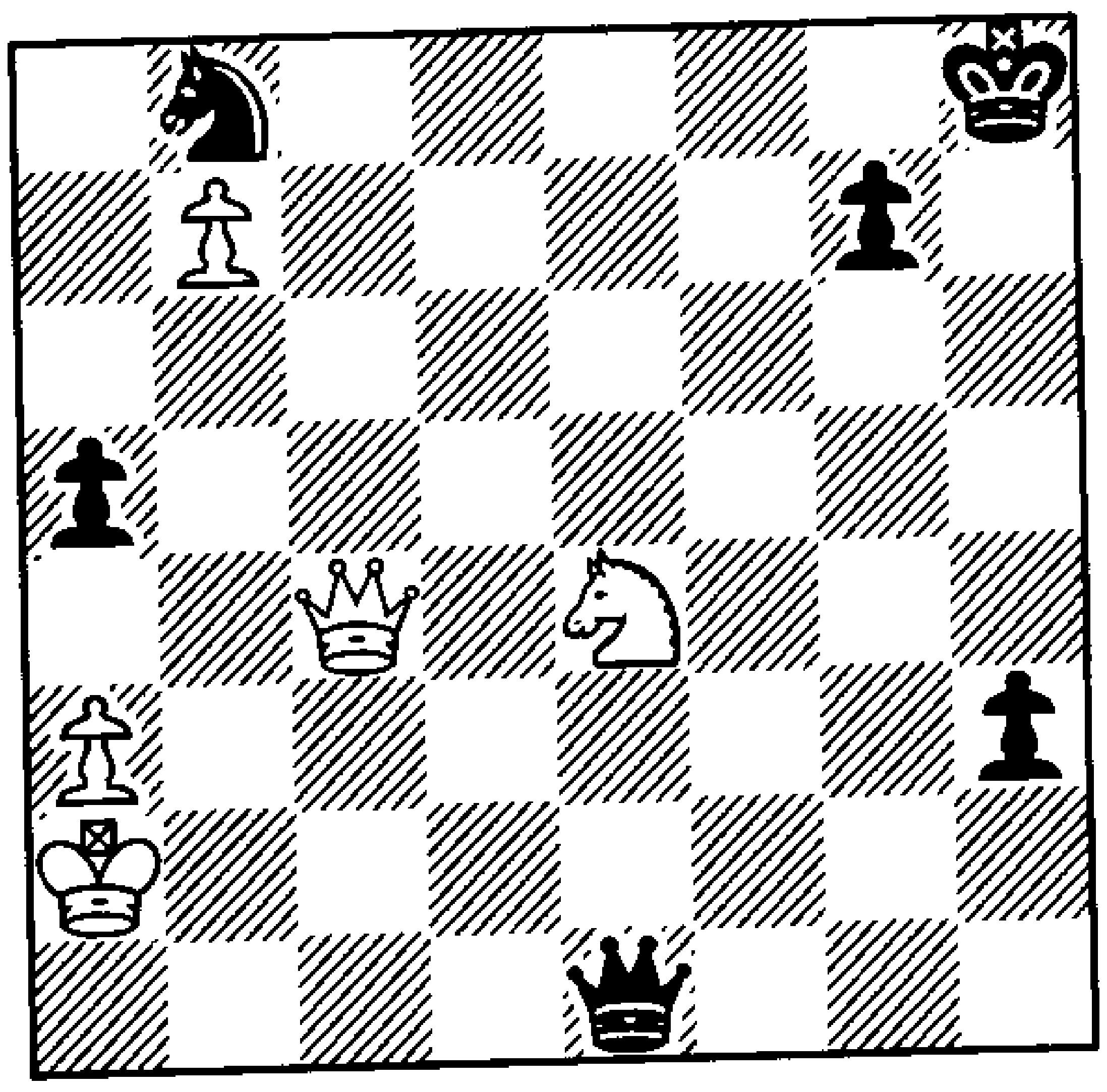
54 ♔a2 ♘xe5?!

It made sense to force perpetual check – 54...♘c1+. But... 'Janowski, like the other masters watching the game, never thought that it would be possible for me to obtain more than a draw out of the game... Before continuing I should add that the endgame coming is perhaps the finest of its kind ever played over the board, and that for some unknown reason it has not been properly appreciated. It is a masterpiece, of which I am very proud.' (Capablanca)

55 b7 ♘d7 56 ♘c5!

'An all-important move,' writes Capa, prematurely burying his opponent, in my opinion.

56...♘b8 57 ♕xc4+ ♔h8 58 ♘e4!



'Black has no check with his queen, nor can the pawn advance, because through a combination of checks I am threatening to win the queen or obtain a similar position to the one that I finally obtained in the game.' (Capablanca) For example: 58...h2 59 ♕c8+ ♔h7 60 ♕h3+ ♔g8 (60...♔g6 61 ♕e6+) 61 ♕e6+ ♔h8 62 ♕e8+ ♔h7 63 ♘g5+!, or 61...♔f8 62 ♕d6+ ♔f7 63 ♘g5+ ♔e8 64 ♕xb8+.

58...♔h7?

Only this is the decisive mistake! Two queen moves would have left Janowski with every chance of saving the game:

1) 58...♕h4!? 59 ♕c8+ ♔h7 60 ♕f5+ (60 ♕xh3+ ♕xh3 61 ♘g5+ ♔g6 62 ♘xh3 draws) 60...♔h6 (60...♔g8!? 61 ♕e6+ ♔h7 is also unclear) 61 ♘d6 g6 62 ♕f8+ ♔h7 63 ♕xb8 ♕f2+ 64 ♔b3 ♕b6+ 65 ♔c3 h2 66 ♘c4 ♕f6+ 67 ♘e5 h1♕ (even simpler is 67...♕b6! 68 ♘c4) 68 ♕c7+ ♔h6 69 b8♕ ♕c1+ 70 ♔b3 ♕e6+ 71 ♔a4 ♕d1+ 72 ♔xa5 ♕e1+ 73 ♕b4 ♕1xe5+ with a draw;

2) 58...♕e3!? 59 ♕c8+ ♔h7 60 ♕f5+ ♔h6, and 61 ♘f2 does not achieve anything in view of 61...♕e2+ 62 ♔b3 ♕e3+ 63 ♔a4 (63 ♔b2 ♕e2+) 63...♕d4+ 64 ♔b5 (64 ♔xa5 ♕a7+) 64...♕b2+ with perpetual check.

59 ♕d3! g6

Black is no longer helped by 59...♔g6 (59...♔g8 60 ♕d5+!) 60 ♕d6+ ♔f5 61 ♕f8+ ♔g6 62 ♕e8+ ♔h6 63 ♕e6+ g6 64 ♕xh3+, or 59...♕h4 60 ♘g5+ ♔h6 61 ♘f7+ ♔h5 62 ♕f5+ g5 63 ♘e5, or 59...h2 60 ♘g5+ ♔h6 61 ♘f7+ ♔h5 62 ♕f5+ ♔h4 63 ♕f4+ ♔h3 64 ♘g5+ ♔g2 65 ♕f3+ ♔g1 66 ♘h3 mate.

60 ♕xh3+ ♔g7 61 ♕f3 ♕c1

No better was 61...♕h4 62 ♕c3+ or 61...♘d7 62 ♕d3 ♘b8 63 ♕d4+.

62 ♕f6+ ♔h7 63 ♕f7+ ♔h6 64 ♕f8+ ♔h5 65 ♕h8+ ♔g4 66 ♕c8+ 1-0

'The game demonstrates the exceptional tenacity and resourcefulness of the young Capablanca in a difficult defence.' (Panov)

An exceptionally tense and, in its way, historic encounter. 'Its outcome,' wrote the

American master Edward Lasker, 'influenced the fate of three outstanding players. For Janowski the undeserved defeat became the drama of his entire life. After winning this game, Capablanca went on to win the tournament as a whole, thanks to which he became the main contender for the world championship and so raised the prestige of his country in Europe that the Cuban government enlisted him in the diplomatic service, thereby providing him with a comfortable existence to the end of his days. Finally, Rubinstein, who had been regarded as Lasker's natural successor on the chess throne, who defeated Capablanca in classic style in their individual game and in the end finished only half a point behind him (without a single defeat!), despite all his further successes was overthrown from his proud height.'

I will remind you of the sensational result of San Sebastian 1911: 1. Capablanca – 9½ out of 14; 2-3. Vidmar and Rubinstein – 9; 4. Marshall – 8½; 5-7. Nimzowitsch, Tarrasch and Schlechter – 7½; 8-9. Bernstein and Spielmann – 7; 10. Teichmann – 6½; 11-12. Maróczy and Janowski – 6 etc. The winner later asserted that his success surpassed Pillsbury's feat at Hastings in 1895, but this is going too far: after all, then Pillsbury finished head of the entire elite, including the world champion Lasker!

Although he lost to Rubinstein (*Game No.64*), Capa won six games, including his eighth-round game against Nimzowitsch, who also, like Bernstein, had objected to the novice's participation in the tournament – and who also, as we will see, became one of Capablanca's 'eternal clients'! Incidentally, in San Sebastian an amusing squabble occurred between them. On one occasion the Cuban could not refrain from making a critical comment while watching a blitz game between Bernstein and Nimzowitsch. In reply the latter advised the young master not to interfere in something that did not concern him. Then Capa invited Nimzowitsch to play some blitz games for a side bet, 'which I won with ridiculous ease, and ended by his retracting the statement he had previously made.'

It soon transpired that in friendly games the Cuban had altogether no equals, and he acquired the firm reputation of being the best blitz player in the world. 'Never before and never since have I seen – and I cannot even imagine,' recalls Alekhine, 'such an amazing rapidity of chess thinking that Capablanca possessed in 1913-14. In blitz games he gave all the St Petersburg players odds of five minutes to one – and he won.'

Instead of a Match – Tours

After his triumph in San Sebastian, Capablanca made a lengthy journey through South America, and then he made an equally long and successful tour of Europe. In late 1911, with the guaranteed support of generous Cuban patrons, he took a decisive step – he sent Lasker an official challenge to a match for the world championship.

Within a few days Lasker replied that in principle he was ready to defend his title, and a further two weeks later he clarified on what conditions: the winner was to be the first to win six games, draws not counting, but with a limit of 30 games; after the 30th game the match was to terminate and the winner would be the player who had a lead of not less than two points, while with an advantage of one point the match would be considered drawn (and the champion would retain his title – a similar rule had already operated in the 1910 Lasker-Schlechter match); the time control was to be 12 moves in an hour, a playing session of not more than five hours a day, with a break after two and a half hours for dinner and rest; the challenger was to secure a prize fund of $10,000 (an unprecedented sum!).

The size of the prize fund suited Capablanca, but he angrily rejected the rest, declaring that Lasker was obliged to defend his title under the conditions as when he had defeated Steinitz (i.e. an unlimited match up to 10 wins), and calling the item about a two-point advantage 'unfair'. Lasker promptly demanded an apology, Capa refused, and negotiations concerning a match came to a standstill.

'Many took Capablanca's side in the dispute, and in my opinion they were completely wrong,' Lasker wrote years later. 'The controversial rule stated that if the score was 1-0, 2-1 or 3-2 after 30 games, the match would be considered drawn. From this, some drew the conclusion that I was gaining a significant advantage, since a draw would leave me with the champion's title. However, the critics did not take account of the fact that the match would be played for a large sum of money, and the aforementioned rule would be valid as regards the division of this sum and was equally advantageous for both sides. And the retention of the title after a 0-1, 1-2 or 2-3 defeat did not have any value for me, unless I were to decisively regain it in a return match. After all, in itself the title of world champion does not give any significant advantages, if it is not acknowledged by the entire chess world, and a champion who does not have the chess world behind him is, in my view, a laughing-stock.' (Who could have imagined that this simple thought would be so topical in the transition between the 20th and 21st centuries!)

It is not for us to judge who was right and who was wrong in this episode. We would comment only that Capablanca himself, on becoming world champion, introduced the 'golden wall' of $10,000, and play to six wins without counting draws, and a drawn match with a score of 5-5 – i.e. the challenger was still obliged to win with an advantage of two points...

Even so, Lasker should probably have played Capablanca then: the latter was still very inexperienced, whereas the champion was at the height of his powers. Here one can agree with Panov, who wrote that a victory for Lasker in 1912 'would have given him an enormous moral advantage and it would have been extremely difficult for the Cuban to achieve a new match.'

In fact 1912 went down in chess history as the year of Rubinstein, who won, apart from the Russian Championship, three strong international tournaments and gained every right to a match with Lasker. But the champion was not in any hurry to come to an agreement with the 'great Akiba'...

For a couple of years Capablanca went into hiding, restricting himself to playing in American competitions and making tours of the USA and Cuba. In the summer of 1913 he reminded everyone of his strength with a result of 13/13 in one of the New York tournaments, repeating an achievement by Lasker twenty years before.

At the end of the year he was invited to the international tournament St Petersburg 1914 and he finally set sail for a tour of Europe. 'I had entered the Cuban Foreign Office (*a pure sinecure, similar to a stipend from the USSR Sports Committee – G. K.*), and was sent to the Consulate at St Petersburg, where I arrived in November of 1913,' writes Capablanca. 'Shortly after my arrival a series of six games was arranged: two each against Alekhine, Znosko-Borovsky and Duz-Khotimirsky. I won five, and lost one to Znosko-Borovsky. It was my first defeat, after having won some thirty serious games.'

The Cuban was still playing with his captivating ease and elegance. See how naturally be crushed the 'threat to the champions' Fedor Duz-Khotimirsky – the master who had defeated both Lasker and Rubinstein in St Petersburg 1909.

Game 78

J.R.Capablanca-F.Duz-Khotimirsky

Exhibition game, St Petersburg 1913

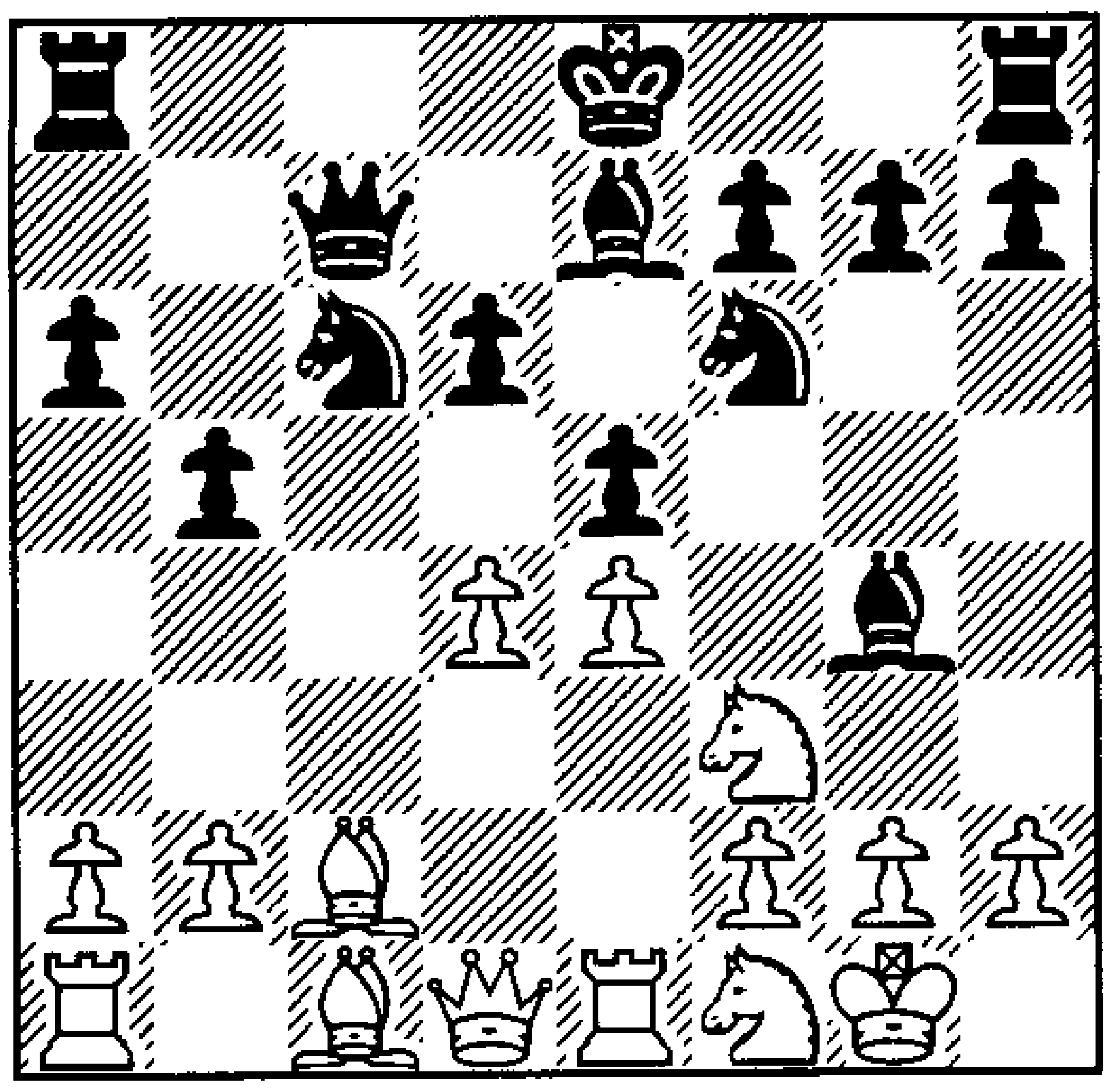
Ruy Lopez C90

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 ♘a5?! (it will be recalled that, at that time, after 8...0-0! they feared 9 d4) **9 ♗c2 c5 10**

d4 ♕c7 11 ♘bd2 ♘c6 12 ♘f1?! Capa himself later suggested 12 d5! (12 h3 – *Game No.53*).

12...cxd4 13 cxd4 ♗g4!?

An attempt to seize the initiative. 13...exd4 is simpler, for example: 14 ♘g3 0-0 15 ♘e2 ♘b4 16 ♗b1 d3 with equality.



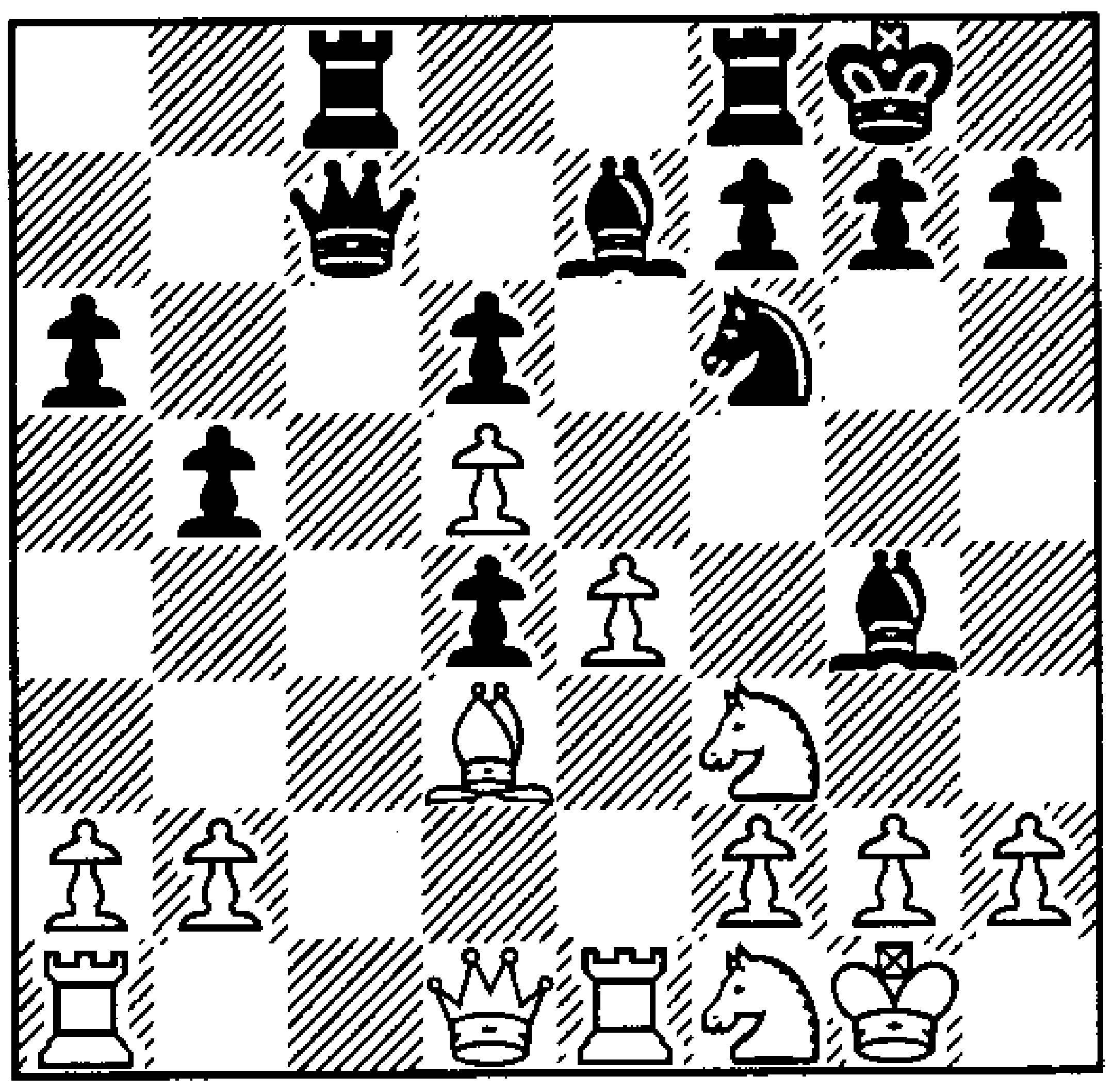
14 d5 ♘d4 15 ♗d3 0-0

The logical continuation of the chosen course was 15...♘h5! 16 ♗e3 ♘xf3+ 17 gxf3 ♗d7 18 ♘g3 ♘f4.

16 ♗e3 ♖ac8?!

16...♘xf3+ 17 gxf3 ♗d7 18 ♘g3 was advantageous to White, but 16...♖fc8! was more accurate, with a normal position.

17 ♗xd4 exd4



18 a4! ♕b6 19 axb5 axb5 20 h3! ♗xf3

20...♗d7 21 ♘g3 ♖c7 22 ♘e2 or 21... ♘e8 22 ♕d2 is advantageous to White.

21 ♕xf3 ♘d7 22 ♖ec1! ♘c5

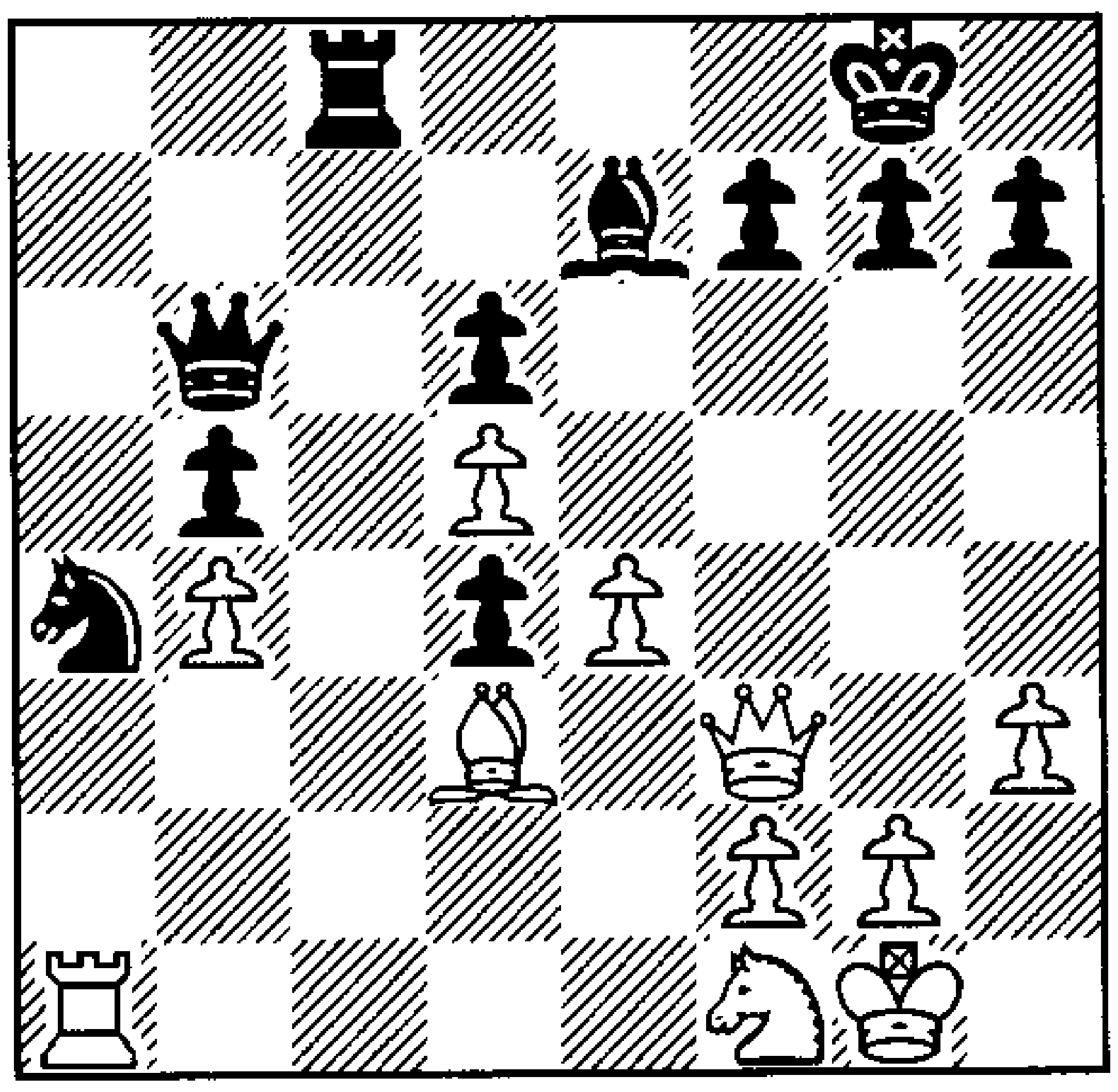
Black is not satisfied with slightly inferior chances after 22...♘e5 23 ♕e2 ♖xc1 24 ♖xc1 ♗g5 25 ♖d1.

23 b4! ♘a4?

'Had now Black played 23...♘xd3, then 24 ♕xd3 ♖c3? 25 ♖xc3 dxc3 26 ♘e3 ♗f6 27 ♘c2 followed by 28 ♖a5, and White has the better game. Probably the best line of play for Black would be 24...♗f6.' (Capablanca) I agree that the sacrifice of the b5-pawn would have led to an unclear game: 25 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 26 ♖a5 ♕c7 27 ♖xb5 g6 etc.

24 ♖xc8 ♖xc8

The culminating point of the game.



'While this game was being played there were present, besides masters of lesser rank, two of the leading players of the world, and they thought that I had allowed my opponent to obtain a winning position. They had not seen my twenty-fifth move, which was to turn the tide of the battle.' (Capablanca)

25 e5!

The prelude to a series of spectacular combinative blows. Incidentally, I don't understand why it was thought that Black had a 'winning position': even after the dull 25 ♘g3 nothing bad for White is apparent.

25...g6

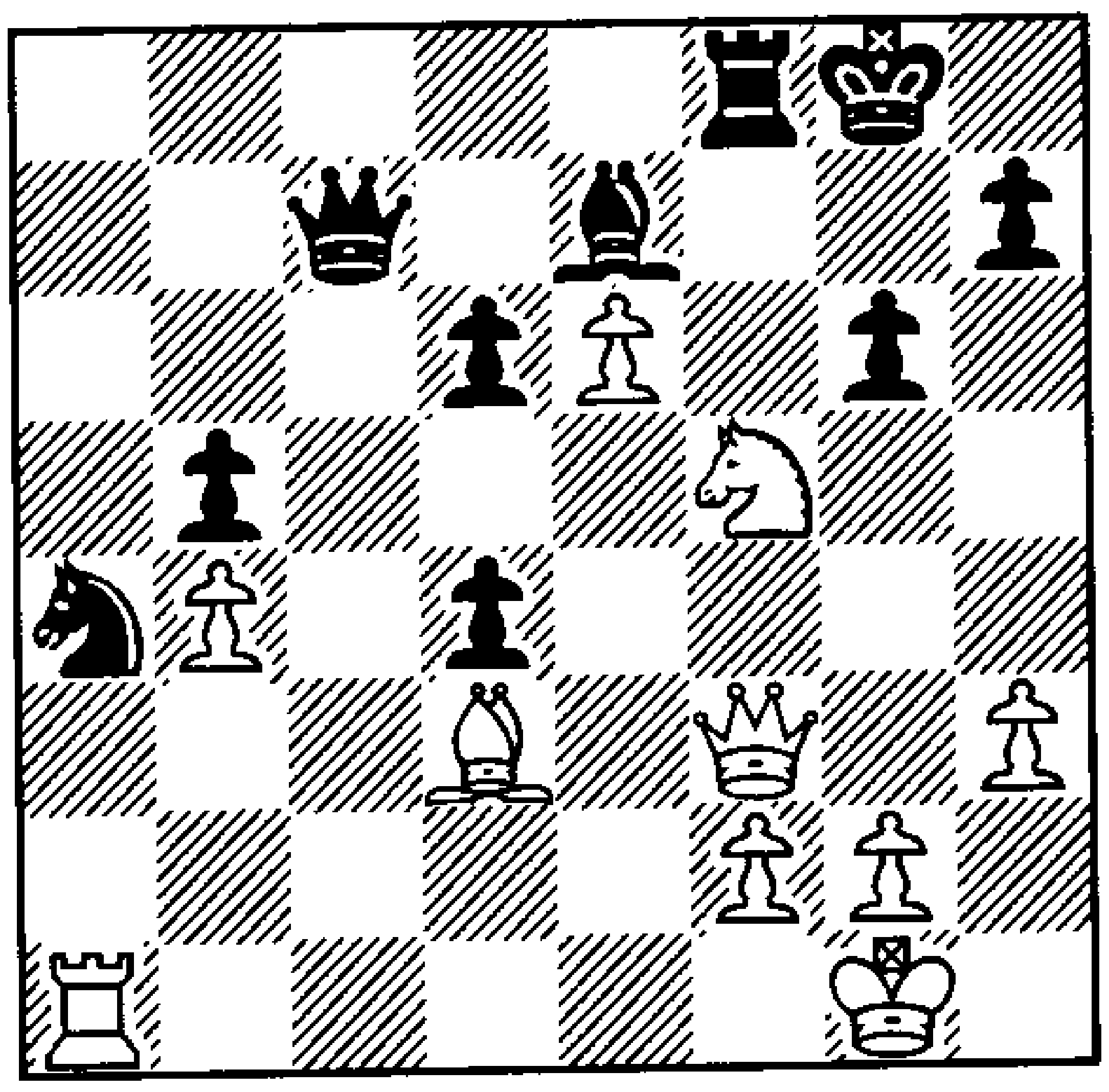
'White threatened 26 ♕f5. Had Black played 25...♖f8, he would later on be forced to play ...g7-g6.' (Capablanca)

26 e6 ♖f8 27 ♘g3! ♕b7 (if 27...fxe6, then 28 ♕g4 with the decisive threats of ♗xg6 and

♕xe6+) **28 ♘f5!**

Very pretty!

28...fxe6 (this hastens the end, but even after the better 28...♔h8 White would have won by 29 ♕e4 fxe6 30 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 31 dxe6) **29 dxe6! ♕c7**



30 ♕c6!!

An unusually pretty and effortless conception!

30...♕d8 31 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 32 ♗xb5 ♘c3 33 ♕d7! ♕xd7 34 ♗xd7 ♖b8

No better was 34...♘d5 35 ♖d1 ♖f4 (35...♘c3 36 ♖d3) 36 g3 ♖e4 37 ♗c6 ♖e5 38 ♖xd4 ♘e7 39 ♖xd6 winning.

35 e7 ♔f7 36 ♖e1 ♖e8

Or instead 36...d3 37 e8♕+ ♖xe8 38 ♗xe8+ ♔f6 39 ♖e3 d2 40 ♗a4 ♘xa4 41 ♖d3 and wins.

37 ♗xe8+ ♔xe8 38 ♖e6 d5 39 ♔f1 ♘b5 40 ♔e2 ♘c7 41 ♖e5 ♘a6 42 b5 ♘c5 43 b6 d3+ 44 ♔d2 ♔d7 45 e8♕+ ♔d6 46 ♕e7+ ♔c6 47 ♕xc5+ 1-0

During those days Capablanca became friendly with Alekhine, who happily showed his remarkable guest around St Petersburg and discussed various chess topics with him. The Cuban's performances, especially his simultaneous displays, were a sensational success.

In early 1914 the master visited Moscow, where, apart from five simultaneous displays and three consultation games, he also played two exhibition games with Bernstein. And again he staggered everyone with the simplicity and easiness of his style. After the following quick win he looked at his watch and exclaimed: 'Excellent! I will still be in time for the ballet!' And he set off by horse-drawn cab to the Bolshoy Theatre.

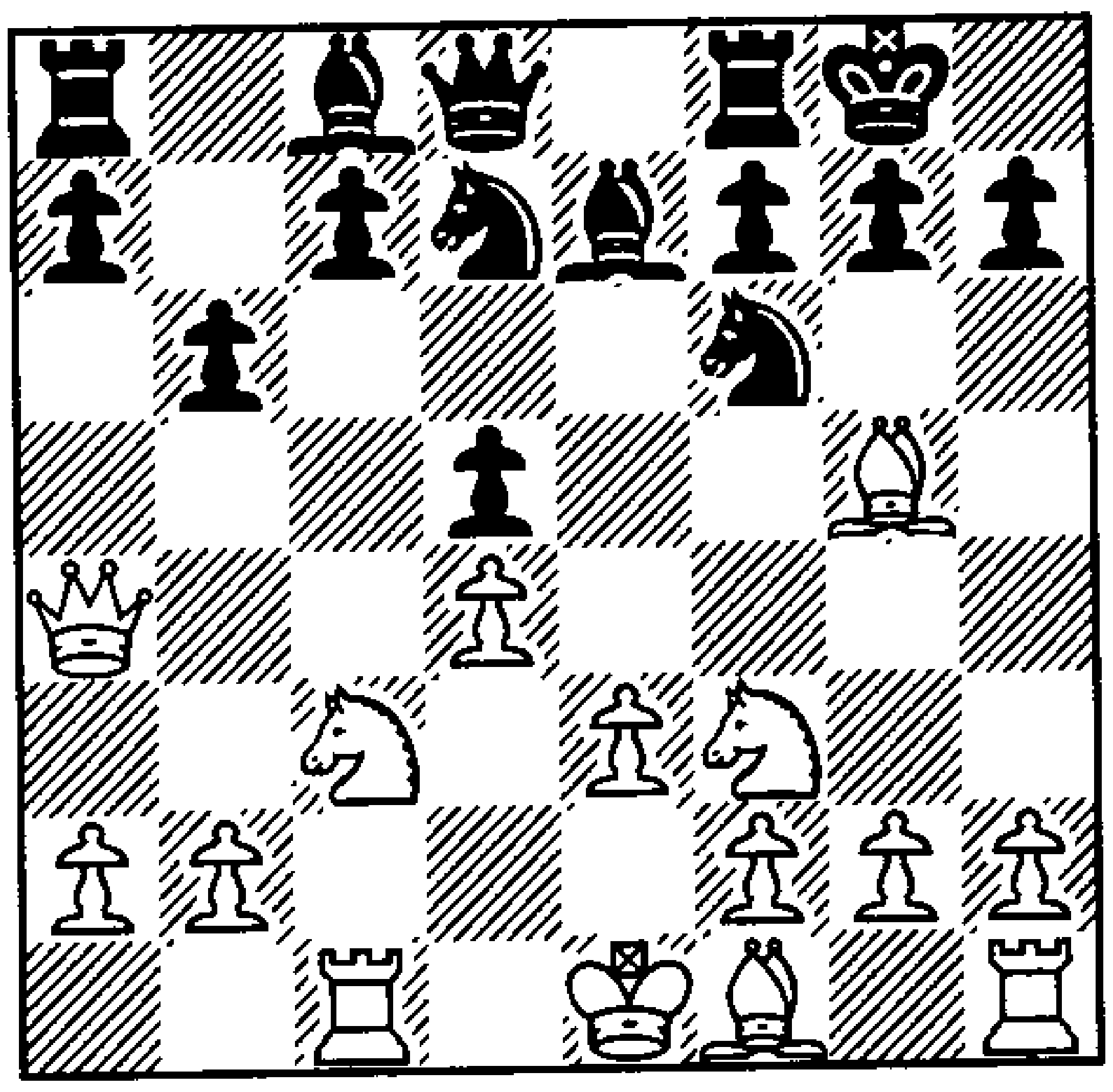
Game 79

O.Bernstein-J.R.Capablanca

Exhibition game, Moscow 1914

Queen's Gambit D63

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 ♗e7 5 ♗g5 0-0 6 e3 ♘bd7 7 ♖c1 b6 (7...c6!) **8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♕a4** (9 ♗d3!? – *Game No.38*)



9...♗b7

It is interesting that in the game Capablanca-Lasker (Havana 5th matchgame 1921) Black preferred the bold 9...c5!? 10 ♕c6 ♖b8 11 ♘xd5 ♗b7 (11...♘xd5!?) with counterplay for the pawn (*Game No.89*).

10 ♗a6! ♗xa6 11 ♕xa6 c5?! (11...c6! 12 0-0 ♕c8! was more solid) **12 ♗xf6?**

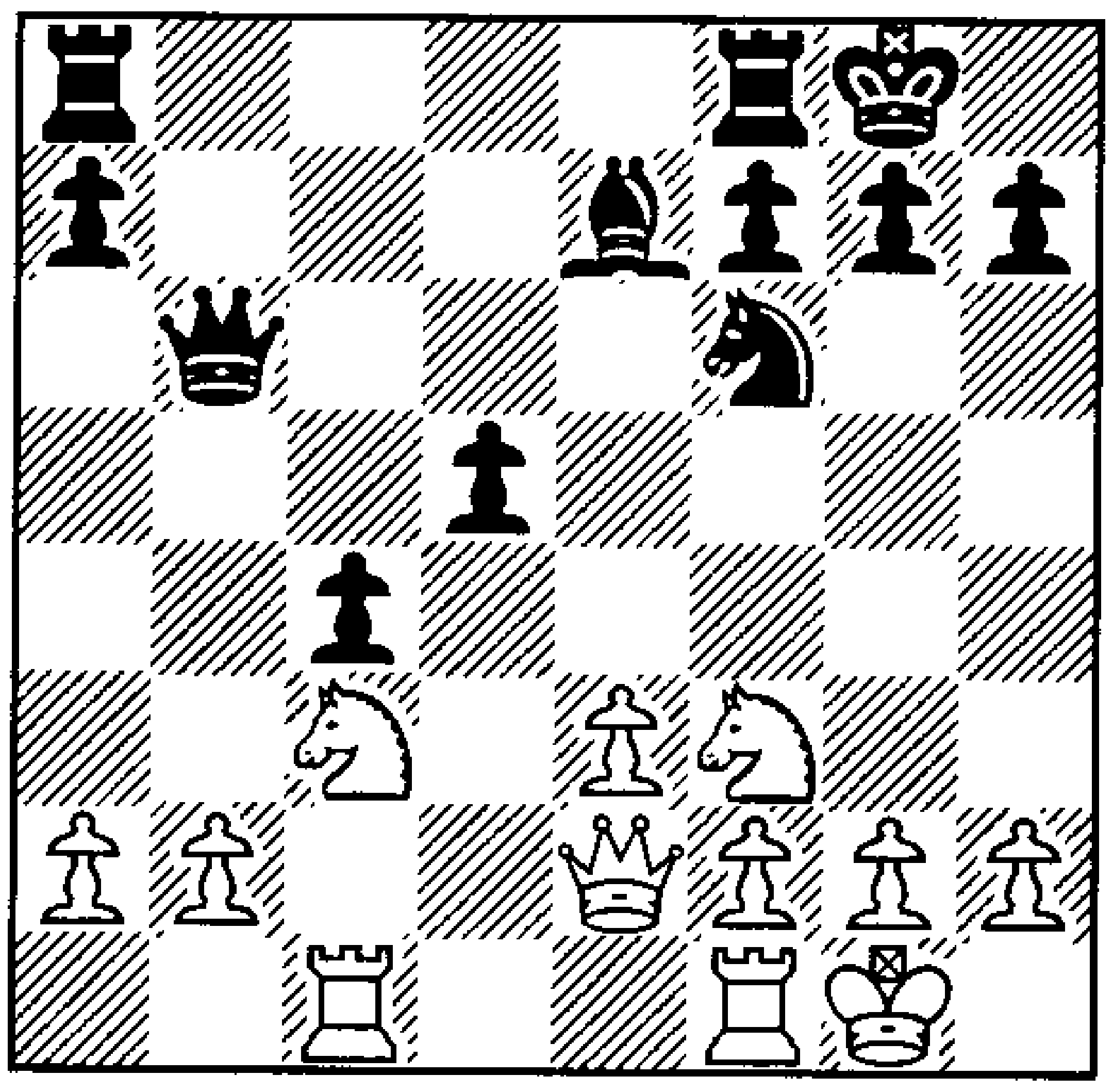
Instead of this awful move, 12 0-0 suggests itself, with a clear strategic initiative, for example: 12...♕c8 13 ♕xc8 ♖fxc8 14 ♘e5 and Black has a rather unpleasant position.

12...♘xf6 13 dxc5 bxc5 14 0-0 ♕b6 15 ♕e2 c4!

Nowadays this is a classic, typical procedure, but then it was a fresh positional idea! 'All the onlookers, and most annotators, considered this last move of Black's as weak.'

(Capablanca) And indeed, Black's hanging pawns are now fixed, the d5-pawn becomes backward and eternally weak, and White gains the d4-square. But this is fully compensated by the pressure on the b2-pawn!

I can give at least two similar examples: Bertok-Fischer (Stockholm interzonal 1962) and Winants-Kasparov (Brussels 1987).



16 ♖fd1 ♖fd8 17 ♘d4

After 17 e4 dxe4 18 ♘xe4 (18 ♘g5 e3!) 18...♘xe4 19 ♕xe4 ♗f6 20 ♕xc4 ♕xb2 the resulting position is slightly better for Black, but objectively drawn. In this case Capa would definitely not have made it to the ballet...

17...♗b4!

'The ultimate object of this move is to play ...♗xc3 at the proper time and force a passed pawn. White makes this task easier by his next move.' (Capablanca)

18 b3?!

A questionable move: it gives Black a passed pawn, which in the end proves to be not a weakness, but a strength. '18 ♕c2 and then ♘d4-e2-f4 was better.' (Panov)

18...♖ac8 19 bxc4 dxc4 20 ♖c2 ♗xc3 21 ♖xc3 ♘d5!

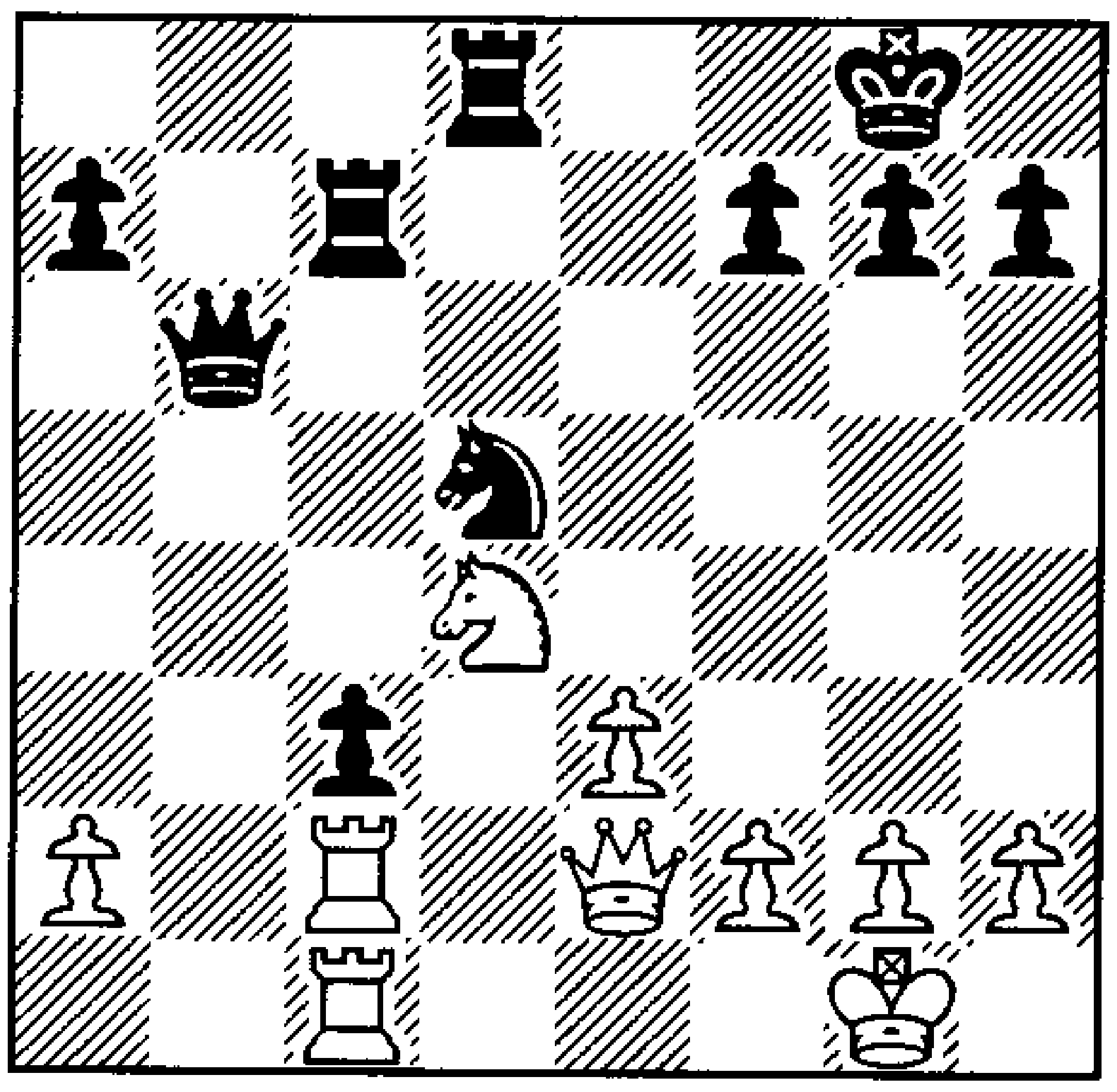
Mini-tactics: 22 ♖xc4? is not possible on account of 22...♘c3.

22 ♖c2 c3

As simply as possible! I am not sure that 22...♘f4 23 ♕g4 ♘d3 would have been better.

23 ♖dc1 ♖c5 24 ♘b3 ♖c6 25 ♘d4 ♖c7!

'Because I had first played 23...♖c5, Dr Bernstein was lured into the fatal trap, thinking that I was aiming at the exchange of knights, in order to obtain a free a-pawn.' (Capablanca)



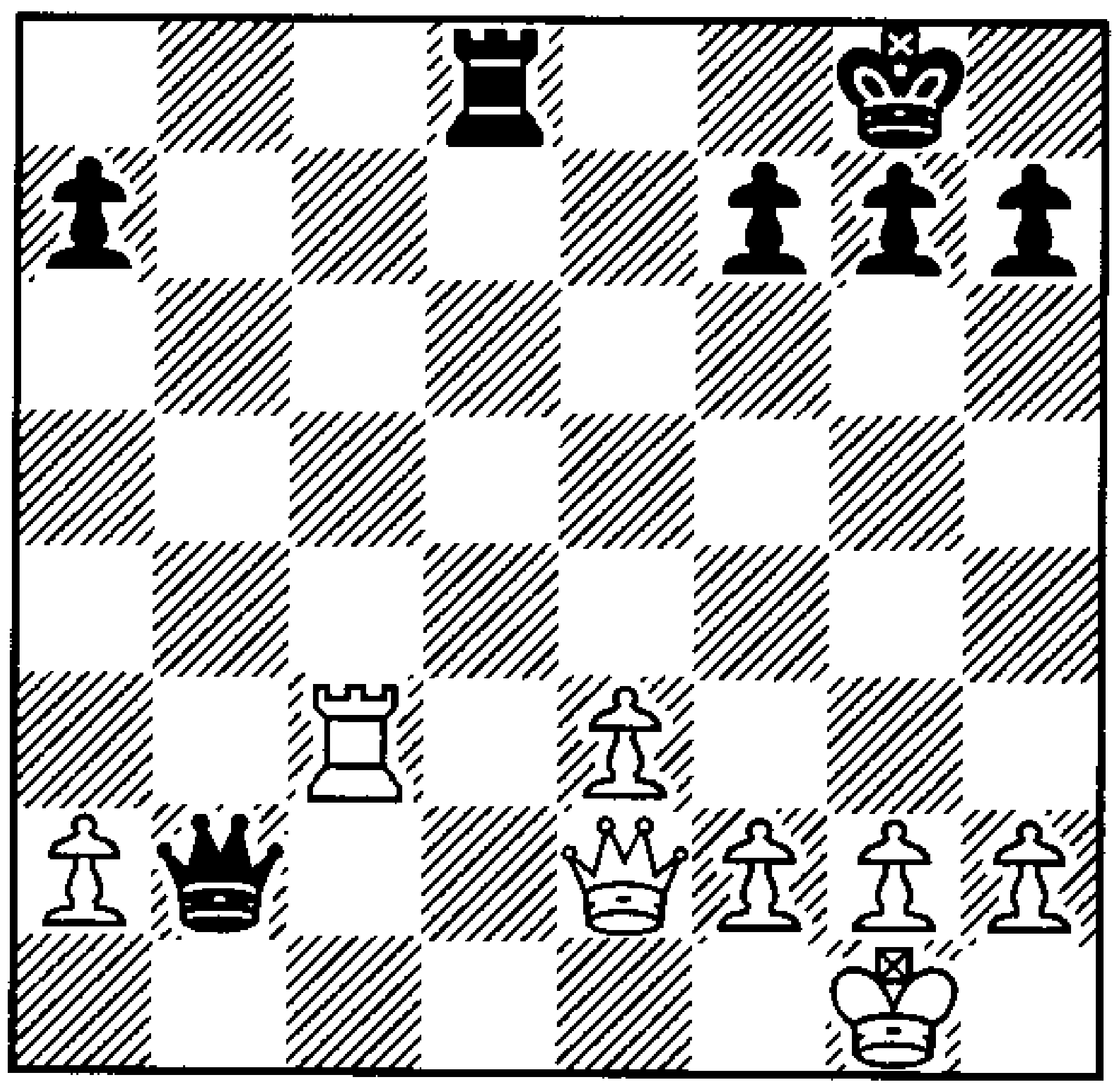
26 ♘b5?!

White should simply have made an escape square for his king – 26 h3, and after 26...♕b4 27 ♕f3 he would probably have been able to restrain the c-pawn.

26...♖c5 27 ♘xc3??

Bernstein decided to 'make a draw' immediately, although he could still have reconsidered and played 27 ♘d4.

27...♘xc3 28 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 29 ♖xc3 (expecting 29...♕b1+ 30 ♕f1 ♕xa2 with equality, but...) **29...♕b2!! 0-1**



A queen sacrifice on the theme of diversion – the weakness of the back rank! 'Simple and – let's not be afraid to use the word – a stroke of genius.' (Botvinnik)

Capablanca's manners and appearance were fully in keeping with the elegance of his play. Friendly and sociable, the brilliance of his expressive, velvety eyes, the dark-golden colour of his handsome face, the black dinner suit with a miniature ivory chrysanthemum in his button-hole...

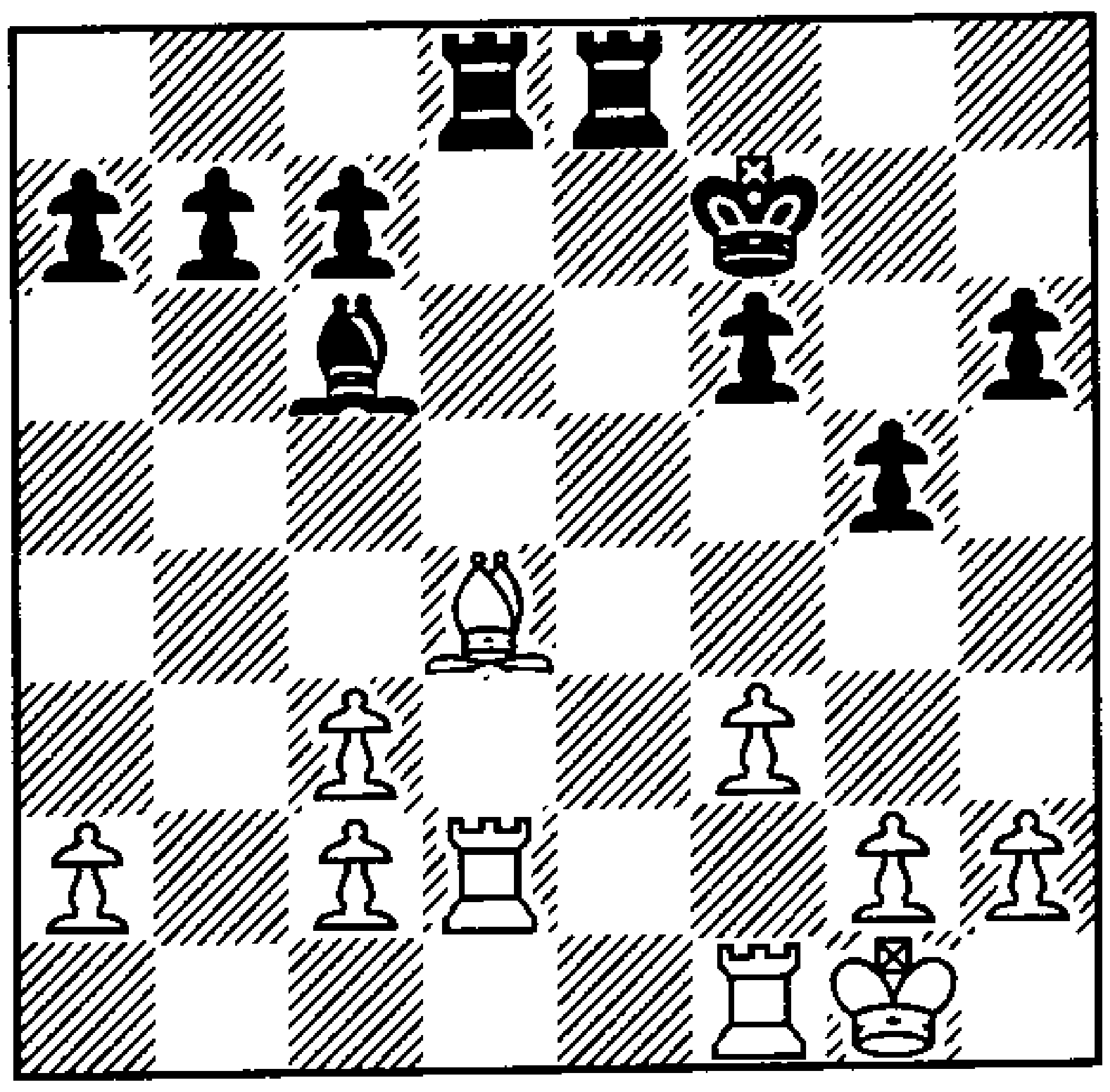
'In Capablanca's personal life there is nothing that would allow you to guess that he is a chess master,' wrote Spielmann. 'His favourite occupations are politics and diplomacy. In addition, Capablanca likes any kinds of fashionable sports, in particular tennis. In everything else he is an elegant man of the world, although he is free of the accompanying "elegant" vices. He does not smoke, he does not drink, and in general he adheres strictly to the rules of hygiene. He gives the impression of playing chess merely for relaxation, incidentally... He is unusually impressionable and feels calm only when his opponent is overcome by the superiority of his technique.'

From Moscow Capa set off on a tour of Vienna, Paris and Berlin, also appearing on the way in several Russian towns. In Riga he met his 'old friend' Nimzowitsch and defeated him in an instructive ending with opposite-coloured bishops.

Game 80

A.Nimzowitsch-J.R.Capablanca

Exhibition game, Riga 1914



21 g4?

Of course, this plays into Black's hands, although he also has some advantage after 21 ♔f2 ♖e5 or 21 ♖fd1 ♖d5.

21...♗b5 22 ♖b1 ♗a6 23 ♖bd1 (but not 23 ♔g2? c5! 24 ♗e3 ♖xd2+ 25 ♗xd2 ♖e2+)

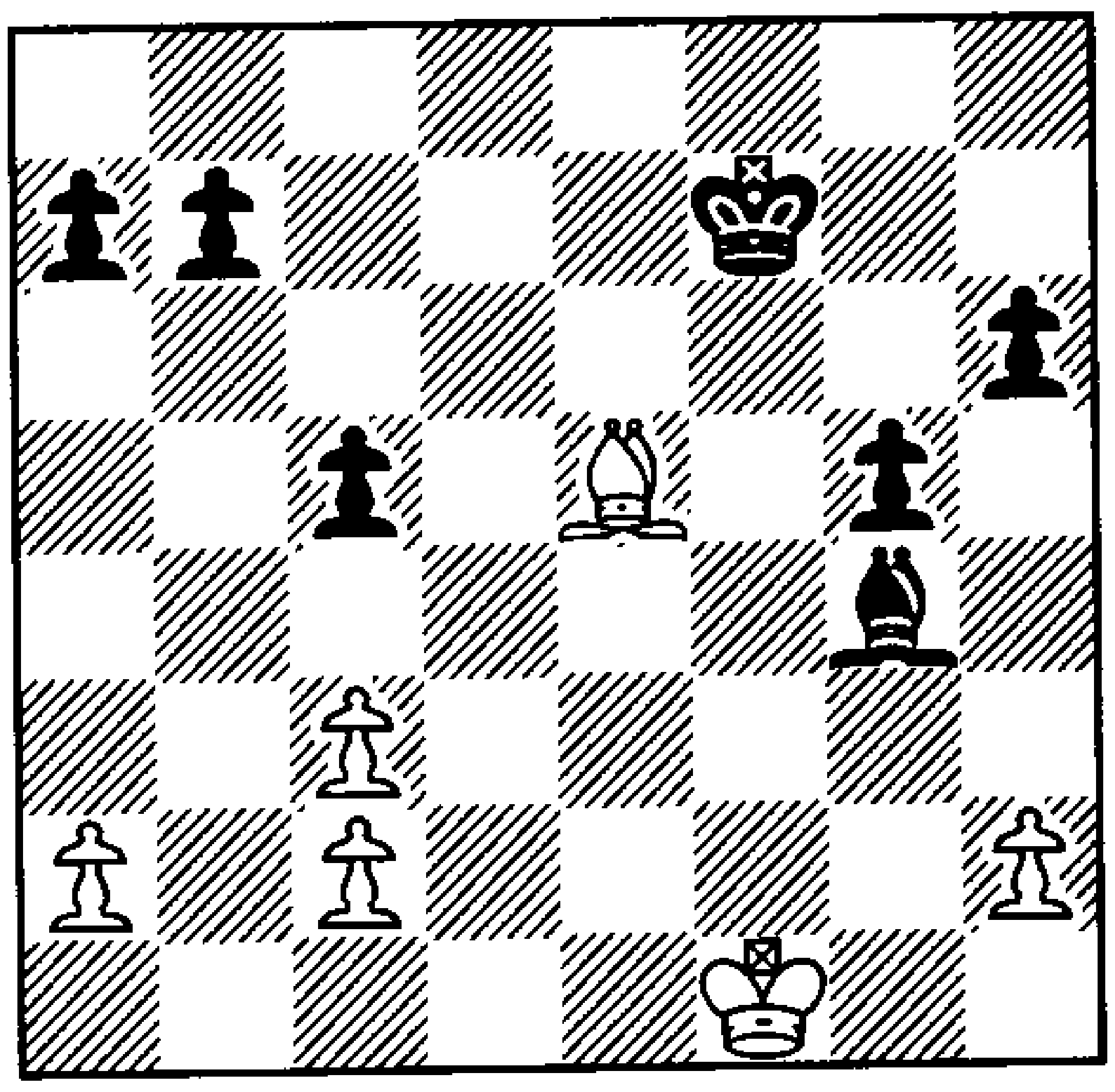
23...♖e2! 24 ♖xe2 ♗xe2 25 ♖e1 ♗xf3 26 ♖f1 c5!

'The move that gives Black the advantage.' (Capablanca)

27 ♗xf6

In the hope of saving himself in the opposite-coloured bishop ending a pawn down. The rook ending after 27 ♖xf3 cxd4 28 ♖d3 ♖c8! is also unpleasant for White, for example: 29 ♖xd4 ♔e6 30 c4 ♖c5 31 c3 ♖a5 32 ♖d2 ♖a4 etc.

27...♖d1 28 ♗e5 ♖xf1+ 29 ♔xf1 ♗xg4



'The ending is now won by force. Several months after the game was played, Nimzowitsch told me that he had studied the game and that he had finally found a way to draw this ending. Although I had not seen the game since it was played I offered to make him a small sporting bet, giving him the odds of a draw in any position from now on. The offer was immediately accepted and we sat down. In a few moves he saw that his idea was wrong and gave up the game.' (Capablanca)

30 a4 ♔e6 31 ♗b8

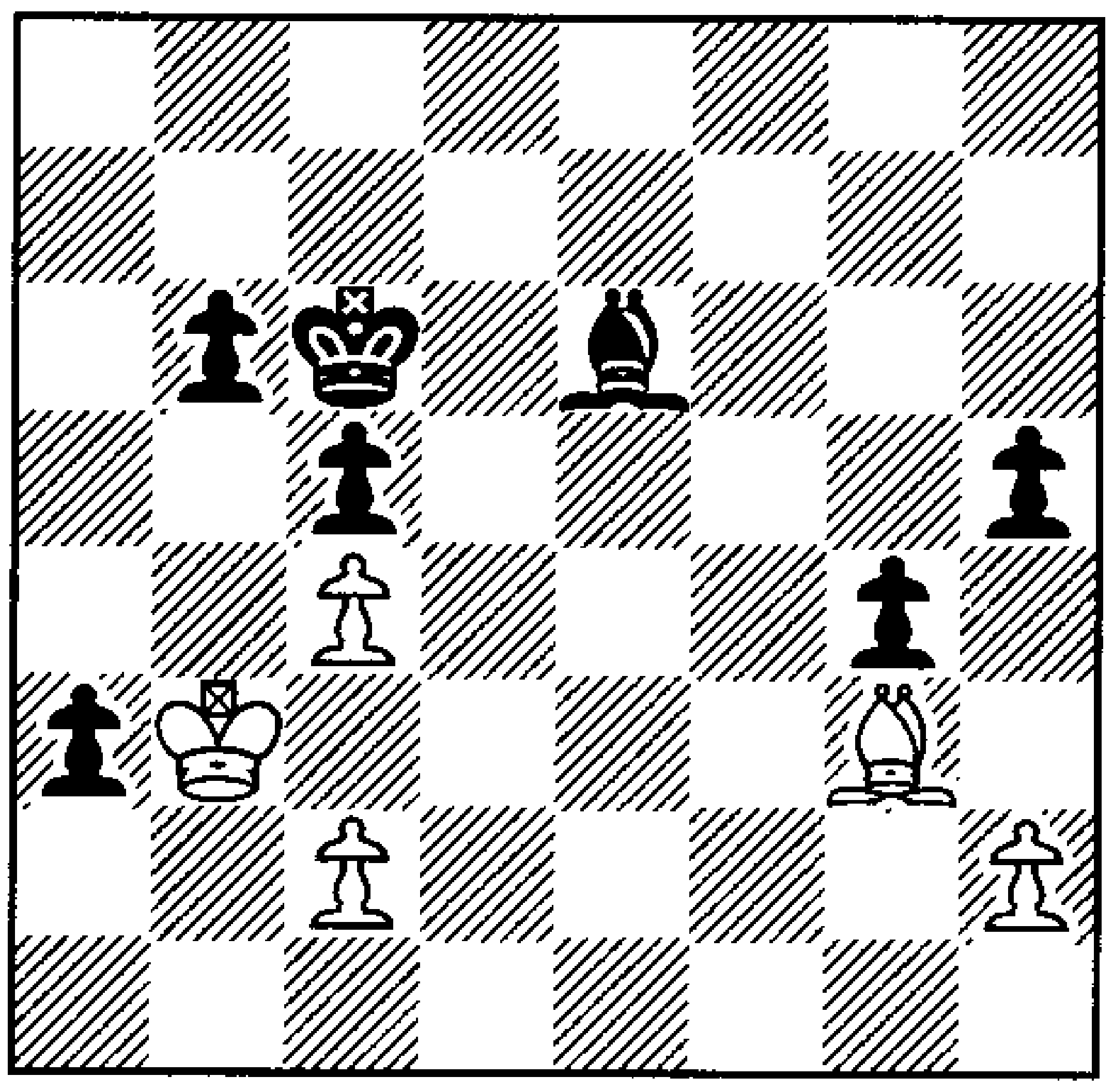
After 31 ♗g7 h5 32 ♔e1 (32 a5 ♗d1 and ...♗xc2) there was an equally inevitable win by 32...♗f5 33 ♔d2 b6!? 34 ♗h6 g4 35 ♗f4 ♔d5

36 ♗b8 a5 37 ♗c7 ♔c6 etc.

31...a5! 32 ♔e1 (it turns out that if 32 ♗c7, then 32...b5! is immediately decisive) **32...♔d5 33 ♔d2 ♗d7 34 ♗c7 ♔c6 35 ♗d8**

But not 35 ♗xa5? b6 winning the bishop.

35...b6 36 c4 ♔b7 37 ♔c3 ♗xa4 38 ♔b2 ♗d7 39 ♔b3 ♗e6 40 ♔c3 a4 41 ♔d3 ♔c6 42 ♔c3 g4 43 ♗h4 h5 44 ♗g3 a3 45 ♔b3



45...♗xc4+! 46 ♔xa3

If 46 ♔xc4, then 46...a2 47 ♗e5 h4 48 ♔b3 g3 49 hxg3 h3!, and one of the rook's pawns will queen.

46...b5 47 c3 ♔d5 48 ♗f2 ♗e2 49 ♔b3 ♗d1+ 50 ♔b2 ♔c4 51 ♔c1 ♗f3 52 ♔d2 b4 53 cxb4 cxb4 54 ♗h4 ♗e4 55 ♗f6 ♗g6 56 ♗h4 b3 57 ♗f6 h4 58 ♔e3 g3 59 hxg3 h3 60 ♔f2 ♗f5! 61 g4 ♗xg4 62 ♔g3 ♔d3 0-1

63 ♔h2 ♔c2 64 ♔g3 b2. 'This is one of the finest endings I ever played, and I have had very often the great pleasure of hearing my opponent pay tribute to the skill displayed by me in winning it.' (Capablanca)

Again all so easy and simple! For his contemporaries this clarity of Capablanca's style was probably even more staggering than Lasker's magical play: that which Lasker got up to on the board was impossible to explain – whereas here everything was so simple! It was thanks to games such as those with Nimzowitsch, Bernstein, Duz-Khotimirsky, Marshall etc, that rapturous legends grew up around Capablanca and an almost mystical worship developed: that this was a chess machine, and for him there was nothing complicated and inexplicable in the game! An age-old dream of mankind had been realised: all the secrets of chess had been discovered...

What was at the basis of this phenomenon? The Cuban calmly played classical openings, instantly grasped the essence of the position and then played instinctively, if necessary making brief but accurate calculations, and sometimes also demonstrating deep ideas (such as 15...c4! against Bernstein). And this proved quite sufficient to defeat almost all the players in the world!

The paradox is that Capablanca's contribution to the development of chess is much less obvious than that of his contemporary Rubinstein, who was like a modern-day grandmaster, a true innovator, who laid the foundation of modern theory. However, Capablanca's positional insight, his 'little combinations' and his fine technique became essential instructional material for all subsequent generations of players, including, of course, future world champions.

Soon to be Number One

In the spring of 1914 in St Petersburg the most important international tournament of the early 20th century took place. For the first time all three world leaders – Lasker, Rubinstein and Capablanca – came face to face. The idea of the organisers was that they should play three games against one another: first in the preliminary tournament of 11 grandmasters, and then in the final double-cycle 'tournament of five'. The winner, if it was not Lasker, would be declared the official challenger for the world championship.

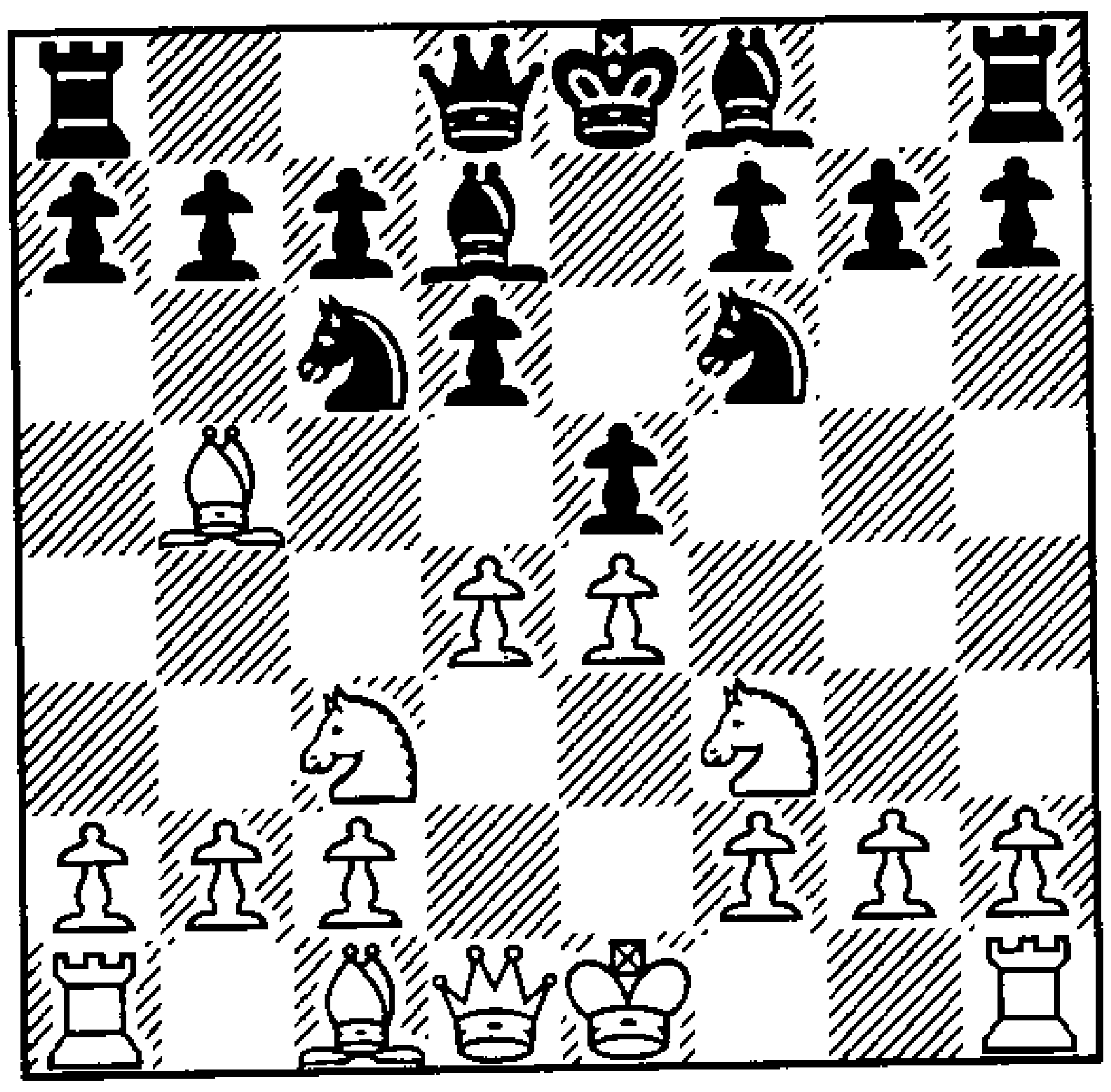
I have already acquainted you with the unusual formula and the outcome of this historic event in the chapter on Lasker (p.205), but now I should like to show you how Capablanca played in St Petersburg. In the very first round he gave an excellent lesson in positional play to none other than Nimzowitsch!

Game 81
A.Nimzowitsch-J.R.Capablanca
St Petersburg 1914,
preliminary tournament
Ruy Lopez C62

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗b5 d6

The fire-proof Steinitz Defence had for a long time been in the Cuban's repertoire, enabling him to avoid unpleasant surprises in the opening. As for the middlegame, Capa was not concerned, being sure that here he would always be able to neutralise the opponent's initiative.

5 d4 ♗d7



6 ♗xc6!?

6 0-0 exd4 7 ♘xd4 ♗e7 leads to a *tabiya* of the variation, for example:

1) 8 ♘f5?! ♗xf5 9 exf5 0-0 10 ♖e1 ♘d7 11 ♘d5 ♗f6 12 c3 ♘b6 with an excellent game for Black (Alekhine-Capablanca, St Petersburg 1914);

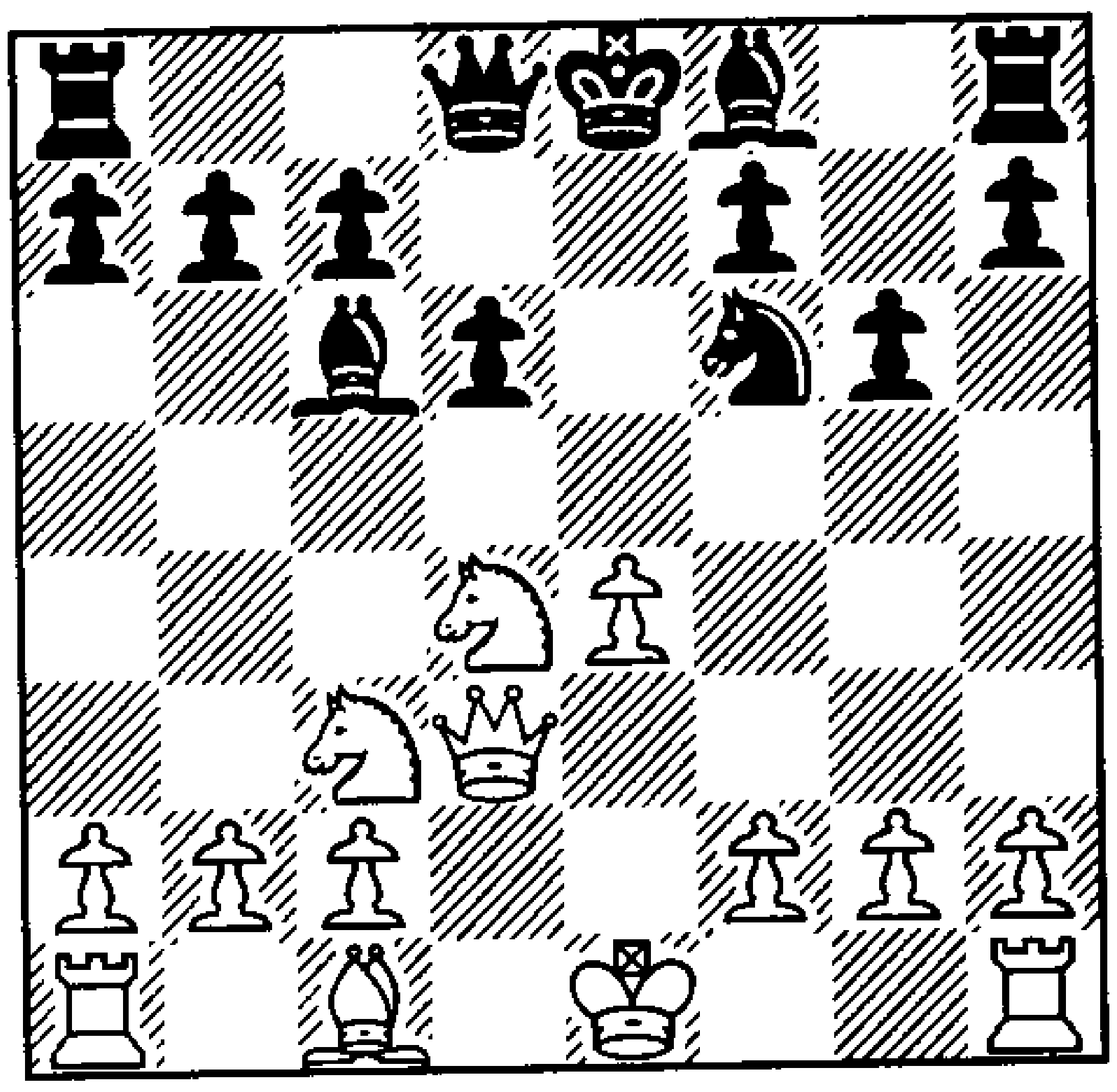
2) 8 b3 (both 8 ♗g5 and 8 ♗f4 have also been tried) 8...♘xd4 10 ♘xb5 ♘d7! 11 ♗a3 a6 12 ♘c3 ♗f6 13 ♕e3 (also after 13 ♕d2 0-0 14 ♖ad1 the correct move is 14...♗xc3!, but not 14...♖e8 15 ♖fe1 ♘b6 16 ♗b2 ♕d7 17 a4 ♕c6 18 a5 ♘d7 19 ♗a1 ♖e6 20 ♘d5! Tal-Larsen, Bled 2nd matchgame 1965) 13...0-0 14 ♖ad1 ♗xc3! 15 ♕xc3 ♖e8 16 ♖fe1 ♖c8 17 ♕h3 ♘e5 18 ♗b2 ♕g5! with equality (Lasker-Capablanca, New York 1924);

3) 8 ♖e1 – the most popular continuation (*Game No.54*).

6...♗xc6 7 ♕d3 exd4 (forced: Black can hardly play 7...♕e7?!) **8 ♘xd4 g6?!**

'A novel idea, brought out on the spur of the moment, with the intention of putting White on his own resources and out of the normal forms of this defence with which Nimzowitsch is very familiar.' (Capablanca)

In those days the usual move was Steinitz's 8...♗d7 – in the opinion of Keres, 'undoubtedly best: although after 9 ♗g5 ♗e7 10 0-0-0 0-0 11 f4 ♘e8 12 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 13 ♘d5 ♕d8 14 g4 (Spielmann-Maróczy, Gothenburg 1920) White has a strong attacking position, things for Black are by no means hopeless.' A later try was 8...♗e7!? 9 ♘f5 (Tal-I. Zaitsev, 37th USSR Championship, Moscow 1969).



Capablanca has embarked on a risky venture, which also involves the sacrifice of a pawn. And Nimzowitsch is unable to resist the temptation.

9 ♘xc6?!

Only the exact Alekhine plan with 9 ♗g5! ♗g7 10 0-0-0 justifies the exchange of the 'Spanish' bishop, for example: 10...♕d7 (10...♕c8!?) 11 h3! 0-0 12 ♖he1 ♖fe8?! (12...♔h8 13 f4!) 13 ♕f3! ♘h5 14 g4 with a very strong initiative (Alekhine-Brinckmann, Kecskemet 1927). Even worse is 10...0-0? 11

♘xc6 bxc6 12 e5! dxe5 13 ♕f3! ♕e7 14 ♘e4, or 10...h6 11 ♗h4 0-0 12 f4 ♖e8?, after which the computer instantly produces 13 ♘xc6 bxc6 14 e5! dxe5 15 ♕xd8 ♖exd8 16 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 17 fxe5 winning.

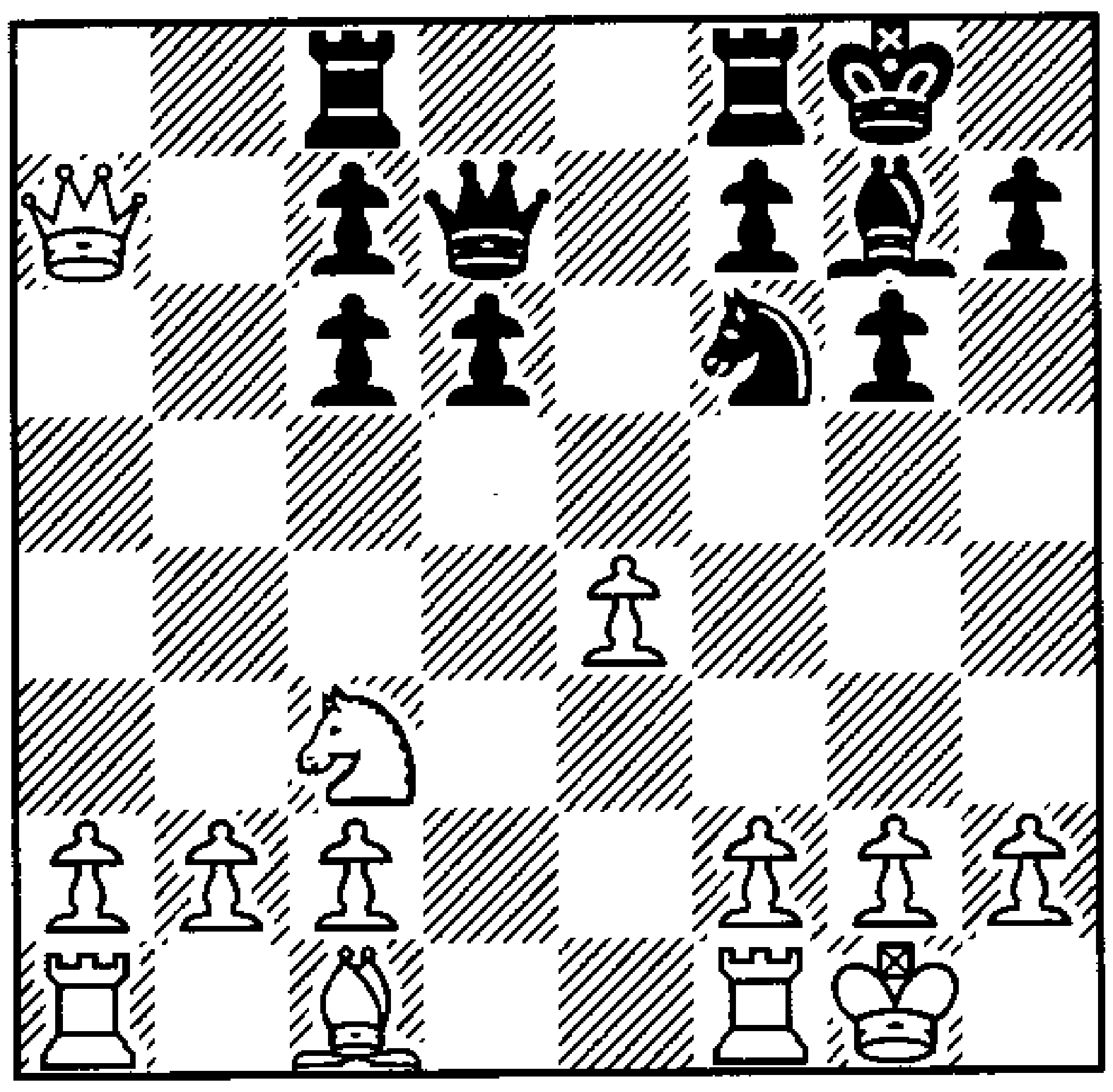
However, 9 ♗g5! is already the next step forward in the comprehension of chess. It would probably also have been played intuitively by Morphy, and so Alekhine's discovery can well be regarded as a creative development of his idea.

9...bxc6 10 ♕a6 ♕d7

10...c5? will not do in view of 11 ♕c6+ ♘d7 12 ♗g5! 'with a good attack for White'. (Tarrasch) For example: 12...♗e7 13 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 14 ♘d5+ ♔f8 15 ♘xc7 ♖c8 16 ♕xd6+ ♔g7 17 ♘d5 winning.

11 ♕b7 ♖c8 12 ♕xa7 ♗g7 13 0-0 0-0

It appears that White is simply a healthy pawn to the good: after all, Black has no obvious threats.



14 ♕a6?!

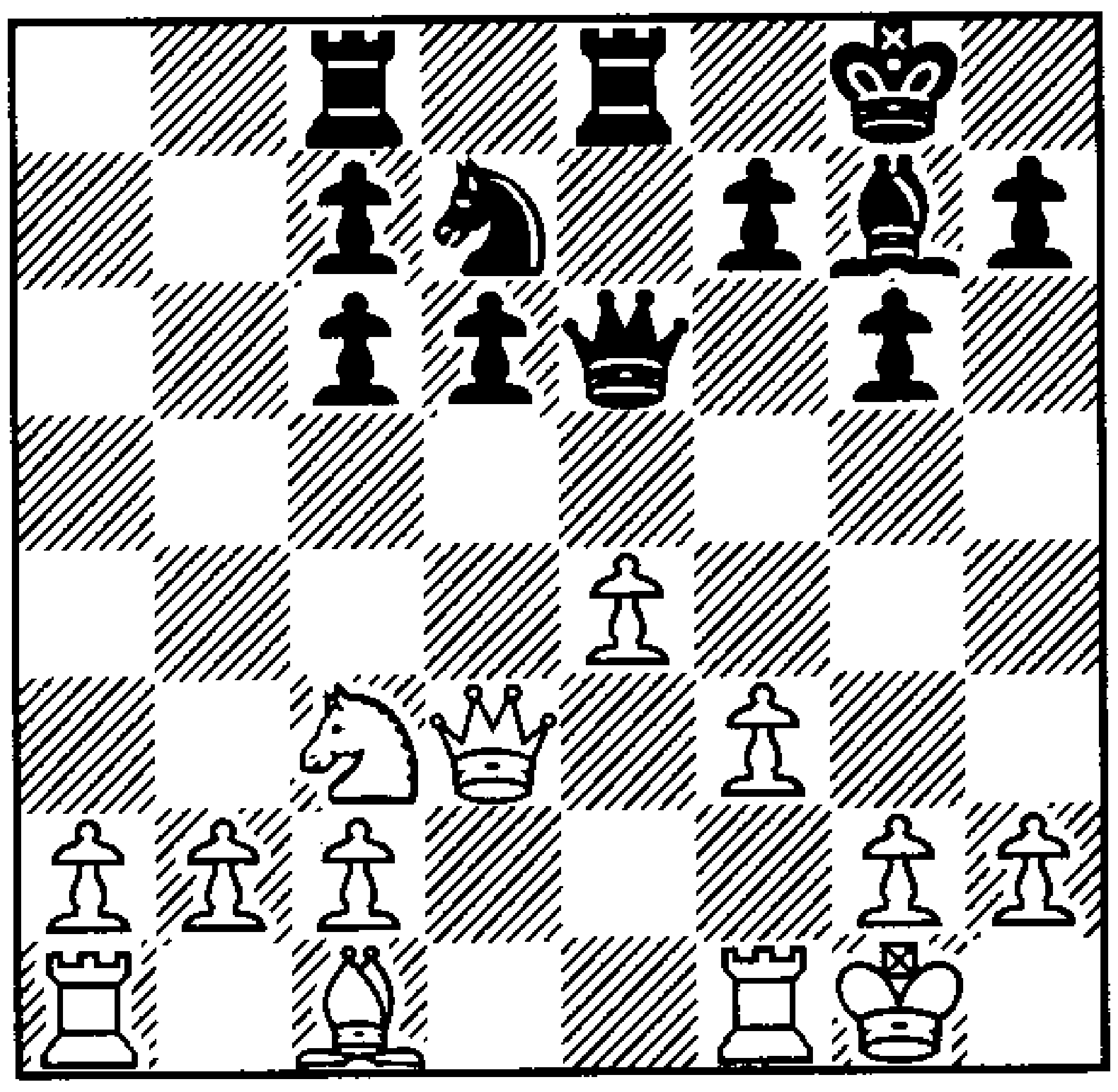
A waste of a tempo. Tarrasch suggested 14 ♗d2!, to answer 14...♖fe8 or 14...♕e6 with 15 f3 and when convenient ♕f2, and he doubted whether Black had compensation for the pawn.

But this did not disturb Capablanca: 'Black is a pawn behind, but all his forces are now deployed and ready for manoeuvring, while White, who had to make three moves with his queen in order to win a pawn, is therefore very backward in his development. Nimzowitsch, it is true, does not make the best moves now, but I believe he has been unjustly criticised for losing this game, although none of the critics have given a satisfactory line of procedure. They have all suggested moves here and there; but the games of the great masters are not played by single moves, but must be played by concerted plans of attack and defence, and these they have not given.'

Well, let's support Tarrasch's idea with a concrete plan: b2-b3, a2-a4 and ♖ad1, and if ...c6-c5, then the queen escapes via a6 and the black knight has to guard the d5-square. Of course, here too Black retains some compensation for the pawn, but it would have been harder for him to demonstrate that he was right.

We can hardly reproach Nimzowitsch for underestimating his opponent's very deep positional idea, an amazing one for the early 20th century. The typical intuitive insight of a genius! Today, in the era of the Benko Gambit, everyone knows that in such instances the pressure of the rooks on the a- and b-files, supported by the powerful bishop on g7, together with pressure on the centre, promises Black long-term counterplay. But at that time this was a revelation...

14...♖fe8 15 ♕d3 (already the sixth move by the queen!) **15...♕e6! 16 f3 ♘d7!**



After the rapid advance ...♘e5-c4 White's queenside will be on the point of collapse.

Now it is clear that Black has gained excellent compensation for the pawn.

17 ♗d2?

Nimzowitsch does not sense the mounting danger. 17 ♗f4 was correct, to eliminate the knight after 17...♘e5: 18 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 19 ♖ab1. With such a bishop Black will now definitely never lose, but we are trying to solve another problem: how not to lose with White...

17...♘e5 18 ♕e2 ♘c4

After giving up a pawn just like that, Capa plays as though nothing has happened, strengthening his position as much as possible. His 'simple' manoeuvres ...♕d7-e6 and ...♘d7-e5-c4 followed by the deployment of the rooks on the a- and b-files are, in my view, staggering for the level of chess at that time.

19 ♖ab1 ♖a8 20 a4?

Little is changed by 20 b3?! ♘xd2 21 ♕xd2 ♖a3! (but not immediately 21...♕e5? because of 22 ♘a4!), and after 22...♕e5 Black regains the pawn, retaining his powerful bishop. But 20 ♗e1 was much better, although after 20...d5! 21 b3 ♘d6 22 a4 f5 Black has a comfortable and active game.

20...♘xd2 21 ♕xd2 ♕c4! 22 ♖fd1

After 22 ♘e2 ♖xa4 23 b3 ♕c5+ 24 ♔h1 ♖a2 25 ♖bc1 White would have faced an equally depressing defence.

22...♖eb8!

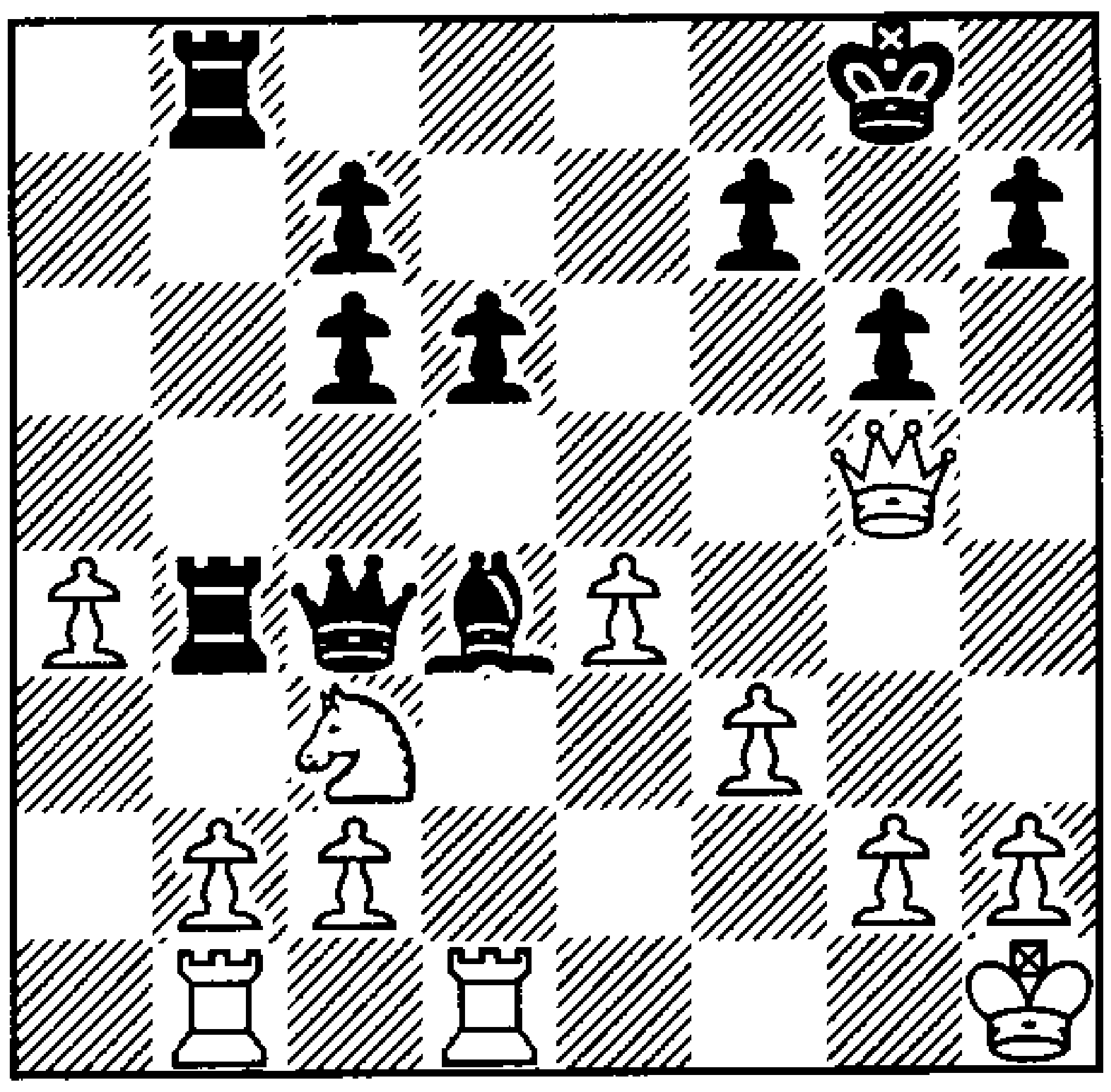
With the threat of ...♖xb2! Of course, Black ignores the possibility of regaining the pawn at the cost of the exchange of his fine bishop: 22...♗xc3 23 ♕xc3 ♕xc3 24 bxc3 ♖xa4 with drawing motifs in the double-rook ending.

23 ♕e3?

The Cuban's play has paralysed Nimzowitsch's will! Only 23 ♕d3 ♕c5+ 24 ♔h1 ♖b4 25 ♘e2 would have retained any chances of saving the game.

23...♖b4! 24 ♕g5 (now 24 ♕d3 is too late: 24...♕c5+ 25 ♔h1 ♖ab8 etc.) **24...♗d4+ 25 ♔h1 ♖ab8**

The triumph of Black's innovatory strategy: the destruction of White's queenside is inevitable! The threat of 26...♗xc3 forces White to give up the exchange. However, this terrible bishop is worth a rook...



26 ♖xd4 ♕xd4 27 ♖d1 ♕c4 28 h4 ♖xb2 29 ♕d2 ♕c5

The conversion of the advantage does not present any difficulty for such a 'technician' as Capablanca.

30 ♖e1? (even so, 30 ♖a1 was more tenacious) **30...♕h5! 31 ♖a1**

Avoiding a transparent trap: 31 ♕f2? ♖xc2!

31...♕xh4+ 32 ♔g1 ♕h5 33 a5 ♖a8 34 a6 ♕c5+ 35 ♔h1 ♕c4 36 a7 ♕c5 37 e5 ♕xe5 38 ♖a4 ♕h5+ 39 ♔g1 ♕c5+ 40 ♔h2 d5!?

'Destroying White's last hope: 40...♖xa7? 41 ♘e4! ♕b6 42 ♕h6.' (Panov)

There is no doubt that in such positions a good player will always aim to avoid unnecessary complications. But in the given instance after 40...♖xa7! 41 ♘e4 there weren't any – instead of the cooperative 41...♕b6?? our 'iron friend' Fritz indicates three ways to win:

1) 41...♕e5+ 42 f4 ♕e7!, and to avoid 43 ♖xa7 ♕h4+ 44 ♔g1 ♖b1+ 45 ♕d1 ♖xd1 mate, White has to give up his rook;

2) 41...♕h5+ 42 ♔g3 (42 ♔g1 ♖b1+ 43 ♔f2 ♕h4+) 42...♕e5+ 43 f4 ♖xa4! 44 fxe5 ♖xe4;

3) 41...♖xc2 42 ♕h6 (or 42 ♘xc5 ♖xd2 43 ♖xa7 dxc5 44 ♖xc7 ♖d6) 42...♕e5+ 43 f4

♖xa4! 44 fxe5 ♖xe4 etc.

41 ♖h4 ♖xa7 42 ♘d1 0-1

Without waiting for his opponent's reply, White resigned. 'One of Capablanca's classic games. The sacrifice of the a-pawn in similar positions followed by the attack on the opponent's pawns along the a- and b-files has been adopted by many masters.' (Botvinnik)

Before the start the Cuban quite reasonably named Rubinstein as the main favourite, saying that he 'is in excellent health, and has prepared for this tournament for a long time,' whereas the world champion Lasker 'is uncertain, because he is a little out of practice,' and about himself 'my health just now is not very good, and I will be satisfied if I finish second.'

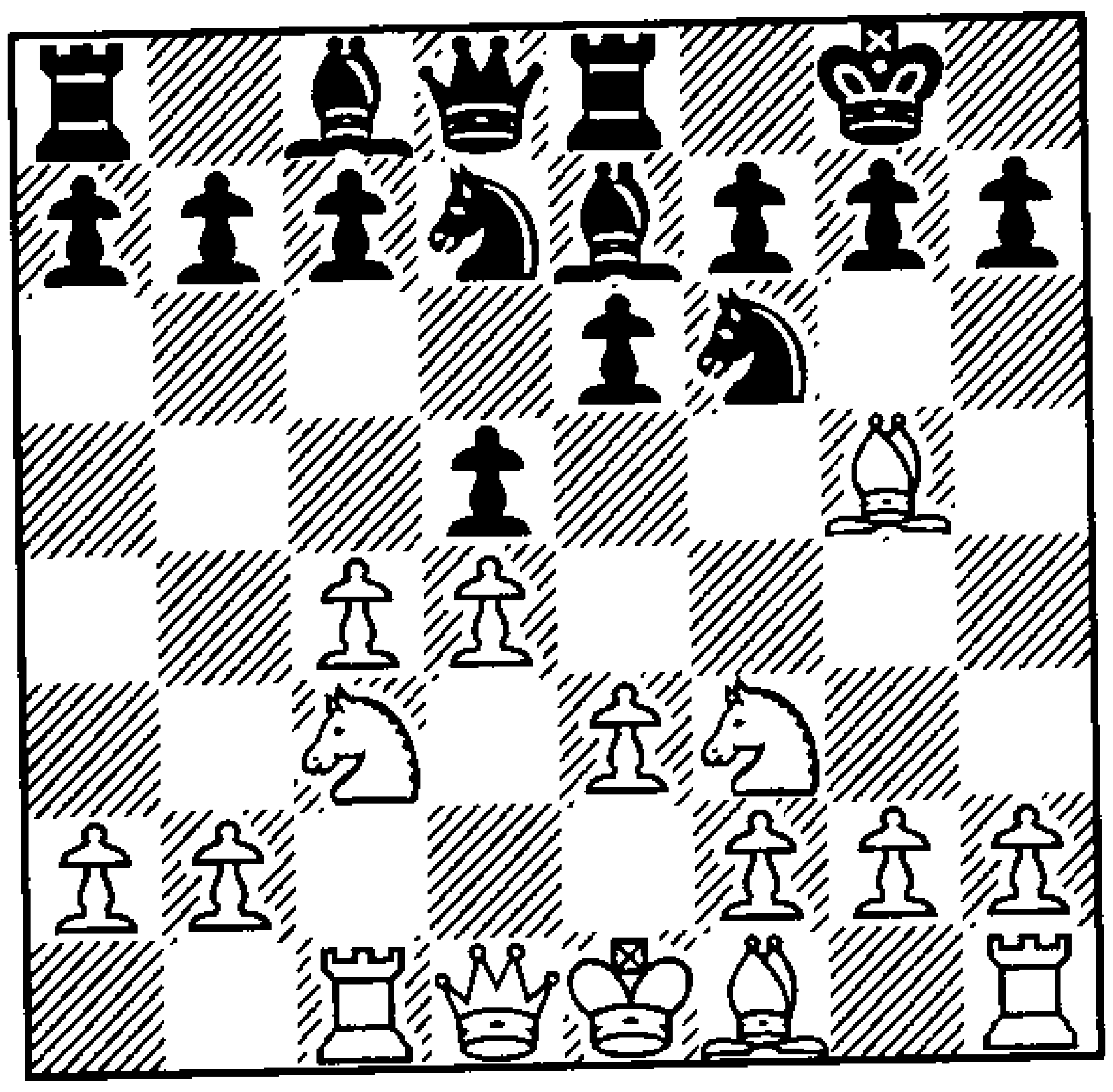
In the third round the two contenders for the crown met in a nerve-racking confrontation, the outcome of which had an enormous influence on their subsequent fates.

Game 82

A.Rubinstein-J.R.Capablanca

St Petersburg 1914,
preliminary tournament
Queen's Gambit D63

1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 c4 e6 4 ♘c3 ♘bd7 5 ♗g5 ♗e7 (5...c6!? 6 e3 ♕a5) **6 e3 0-0 7 ♖c1 ♖e8?!**



Fashionable at that time, but not the most accurate move. At that time the theory of the Queen's Gambit was only just being developed, and it was possibly this game that suggested to Capablanca the idea of the relieving variation 7...c6 8 ♗d3 dxc4 9 ♗xc4 ♘d5 etc.

8 ♕c2!?

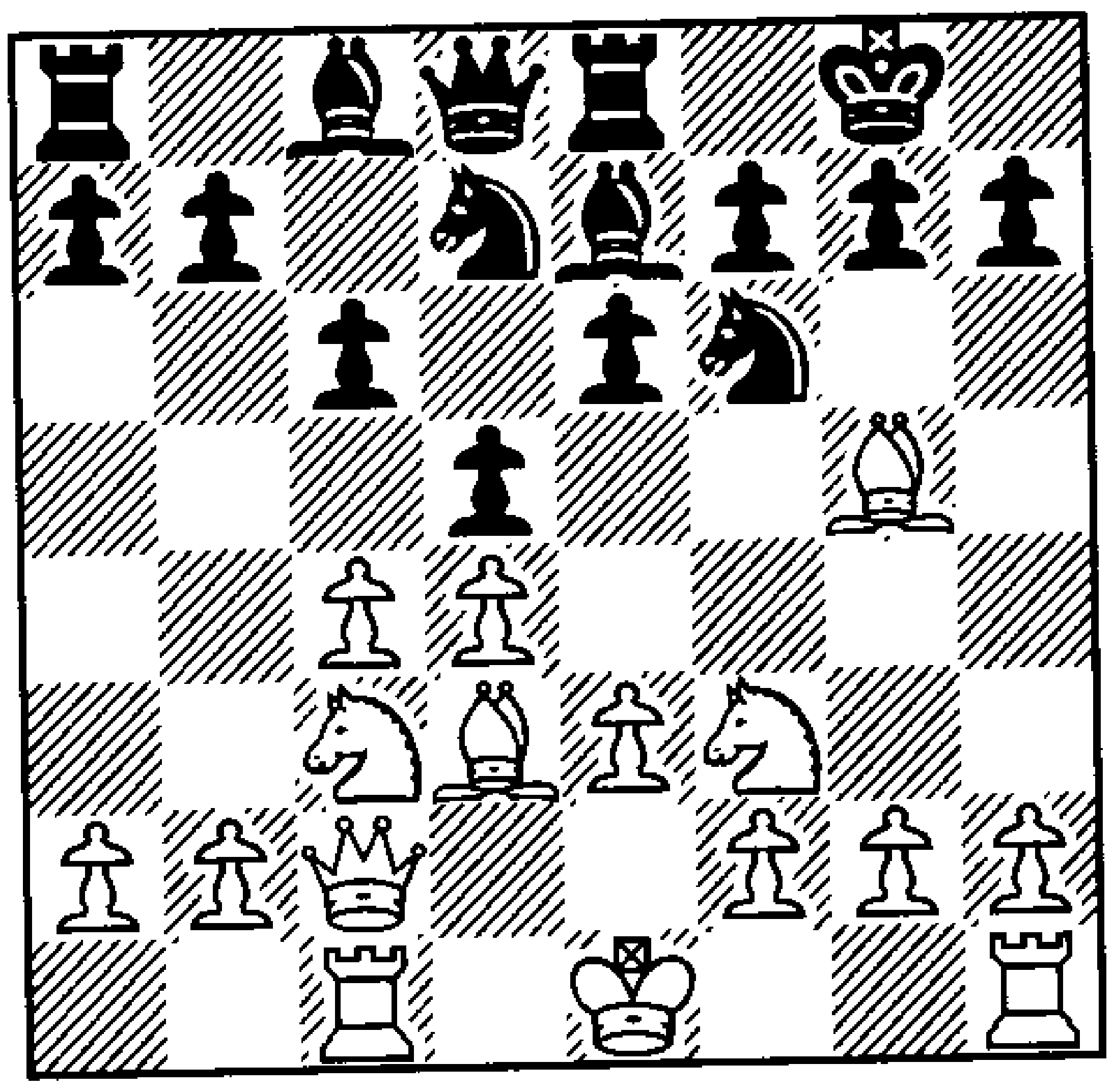
This is more useful than 8 a3 a6! (Janowski, Rubinstein) or 8 ♗d3 dxc4 9 ♗xc4 a6! 10 0-0 b5 11 ♗d3 ♗b7 12 ♕e2 c5, which was also introduced by Janowski (1908), and then also employed by Rubinstein, along with 9...c5 10 0-0 a6!

8...c6

Here are some later tries: 8...dxc4 9 ♗xc4 c5 10 0-0 cxd4 11 ♘xd4 a6 12 ♖fd1 ♕a5 13 ♗h4 ♘e5 14 ♗e2 with some advantage (Rubinstein-Maróczy, Gothenburg 1920), or 8...h6!? 9 ♗h4 c5 10 cxd5 ♘xd5 11 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 12 dxc5 ♘xc5 13 ♗b5 ♗d7 with a rapid draw (Capablanca-Lasker, Havana 13th matchgame 1921).

9 ♗d3

But here 9 a3!? makes a lot of sense: 9...dxc4 (9...h6 10 ♗f4!?) 10 ♗xc4 ♘d5 (inferior is 10...b5?! 11 ♗a2! a6 12 ♗b1 h6 13 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 14 ♘e4) 11 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 12 ♘e4 (12 ♘e2 has also been played) 12...♘5f6 (12...h6?! 13 0-0 b6 14 ♗a2 ♗b7 15 ♗b1 ♘5f6 16 ♘g3 g6 17 e4 Smyslov-Hort, Leipzig Olympiad 1960) 13 ♘g3 c5 14 0-0 cxd4 15 ♘xd4 ♘b6 16 ♗a2 with some advantage (Euwe-Lasker, Zurich 1934). Evidently the waiting move 9...a6!? is more solid.



9...dxc4?!

Capa follows Bernstein's plan, employed a couple of months earlier in one of the exhibition games in Moscow. However, it was worth eliminating the attack on the h7-pawn by 9...h6, and if 10 ♗h4, then 10...dxc4. True, here Black has to reckon with 10 ♗f4!? – after 10...dxc4 11 ♗xc4 ♘d5 12 0-0 ♘xf4 13 exf4 White retains the initiative.

10 ♗xc4 b5?!

Also in White's favour is 10...a6 (10...h6 11 ♗f4!?) 11 0-0 b5 12 ♗d3 c5 13 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 14 dxc5 ♗xc5 15 ♘e4. The lesser evil looks to be 10...♘d5, as Lasker played in the 11th game of the 1921 match (*Game No.91*), or even 10...c5.

11 ♗d3 a6?!

Even after the comparatively better 11...♗b7 12 0-0! (12 ♘e5 ♘xe5 13 dxe5 ♘d7 14 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 15 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 16 ♗e4 ♘xe5 17 ♕e2 ♔g8 is less clear) Black has a difficult position: 12...♕a5?! 13 ♘e5 ♘f8 14 ♘e4! ♕xa2 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16 ♘xf7! wins for White, 12...h6 13 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 14 ♘e4 and the bishop at b7 is shut in, or 12...a6 13 ♘e5 c5 14 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16 dxc5 etc.

12 ♘e5!

'This move disrupts all Black's plans.' (Tarrasch) The modest 12 0-0 ♗b7 13 ♘e5 was also quite good, transposing into the previous variation.

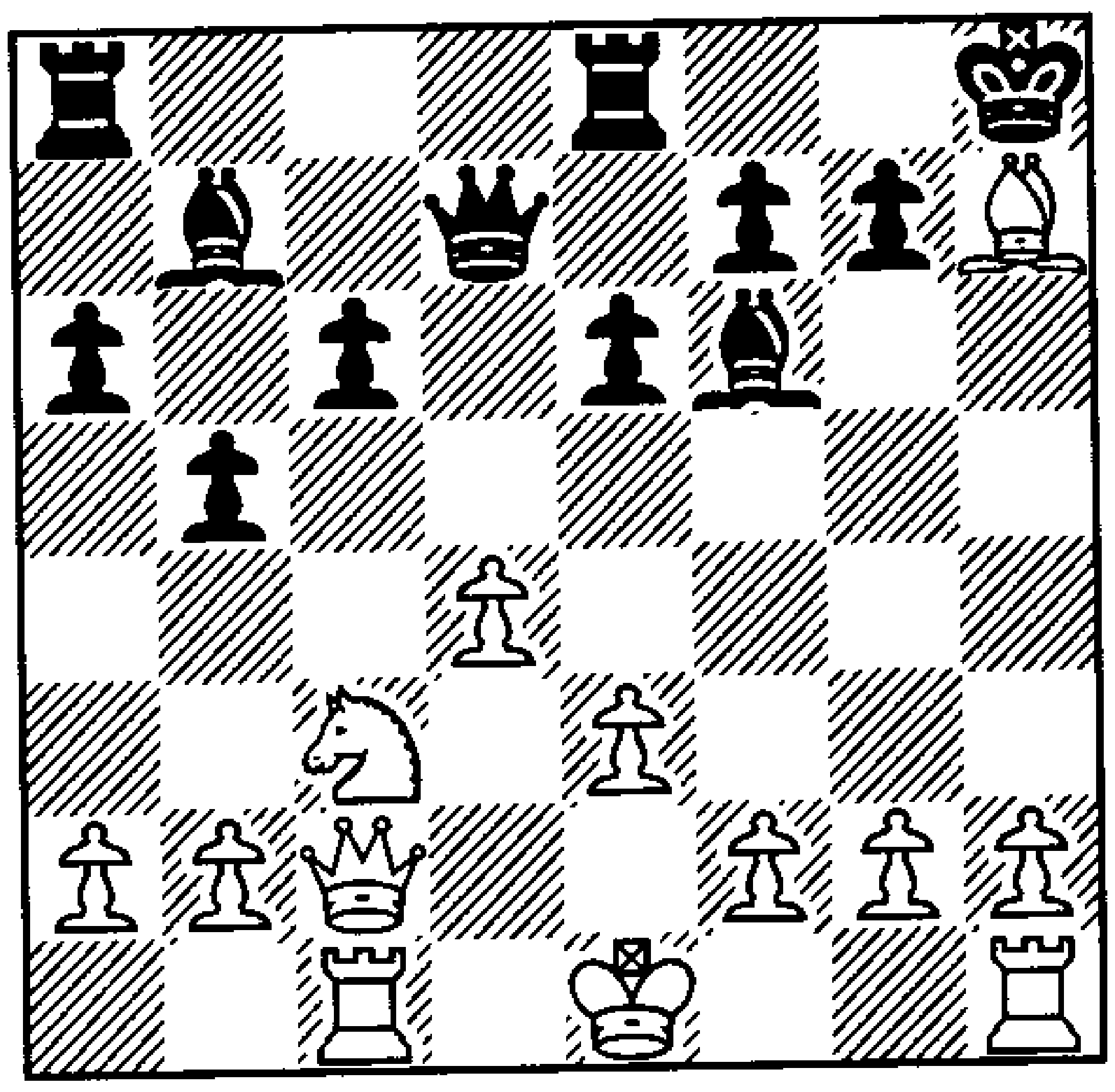
12...♗b7

If 12...♕b6 (12...c5?! 13 ♘c6 ♕b6 14 ♘xe7+ ♖xe7 15 ♗xh7+) there can follow 13 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 14 ♗xf6 gxf6 15 ♗xh7+ ♔g7 16 Be4! (16 ♗d3?! c5! Ed. Lasker-Hodges, New York 1915), or 13 ♗xf6! ♘xf6 (13...♗xf6 14 ♗xh7+; 13...gxf6 14 ♗xh7+ ♔g7 15 ♘xc6! f5 16 ♗xf5 exf5 17 ♘d5) 14 ♘e4 and Black loses material.

And if 12...♘xe5 13 dxe5 ♘d7 14 ♗xh7+ ♔h8, then 15 ♗xe7! (but not 15 ♗f4 g6 16 ♗xg6 fxg6 17 ♕xg6 ♘f8 18 ♕h5+ ♘h7) 15...♕xe7 16 ♗e4 ♘xe5 17 ♕e2 f5 18 f4! with a powerful initiative.

13 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 14 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15 ♗xh7+ ♔h8

A critical position. White is a healthy pawn to the good, and he has to choose a plan for converting his advantage.



16 ♗e4?

'The advantage could have been retained only by a sharp attack on the king – 16 ♘e4! ♗e7 17 h4!' (Tarrasch) Yes, the sharp advance of the h-pawn looks not at all bad: if 17...♖ac8, then 18 ♘c5! ♗xc5 19 dxc5 with a complete bind, since after 19...g6?! White has a forced win by 20 h5! ♔xh7 21 hxg6+ ♔g8 22 ♖h7 ♖e7 23 ♖d1! ♕c7 24 gxf7+ ♖xf7 25 ♕g6+.

Or 17...♗b4+ 18 ♔f1 e5 19 ♘c5! (the idea of blocking in the b7-bishop is so good, that I do not even analyse 19 ♘g5!?) 19...♗xc5 20 dxc5 (20 ♗f5?! ♕d5 21 dxc5 allows the chance 21...e4 22 ♗g4 ♗c8!), and again after 20...g6?! 21 h5! ♔xh7 22 hxg6+ ♔g8 23 ♖d1! there is no way of saving the game: 23...♕e6 (23...♕c7 24 ♕f5!) 24 ♖d6 ♕xa2 (24...♕c4+ 25 ♕xc4 bxc4 26 gxf7+ ♔xf7 27 ♖h7+) 25 ♕f5 ♕c4+ 26 ♔e1 ♕b4+ 27 ♖d2 winning.

I should add that White would also have retained the advantage by 16 ♗d3!? e5 17 ♘e4! (in my opinion, this is stronger than 17 dxe5 and ♘e4) 17...exd4 18 ♘xf6 gxf6 19 ♕e2 (19 0-0 dxe3 20 fxe3 ♖xe3 21 ♖cd1 is less clear) 19...♕d5 20 0-0 c5 21 e4, or 17...♗e7 18 ♘c5 ♗xc5 19 dxc5 ♕d5 20 ♗e4 ♕xa2 21 0-0 and again Black is 'a bishop down'.

The nature of Rubinstein's mistake can be explained: after quickly gaining a winning position and afraid of squandering his advantage, he decided to operate with purely technical means, without any risk – and he moved his bishop from h7, so as not to have to calculate the 'sharp' variations with ...g7-g6. Moreover, the retreat to e4 looks logical: the long diagonal! Playing against any other opponent (apart perhaps from Lasker), Rubinstein would most probably have converted his pawn advantage. But Capablanca makes things as difficult as possible for White, and puts up a desperate resistance.

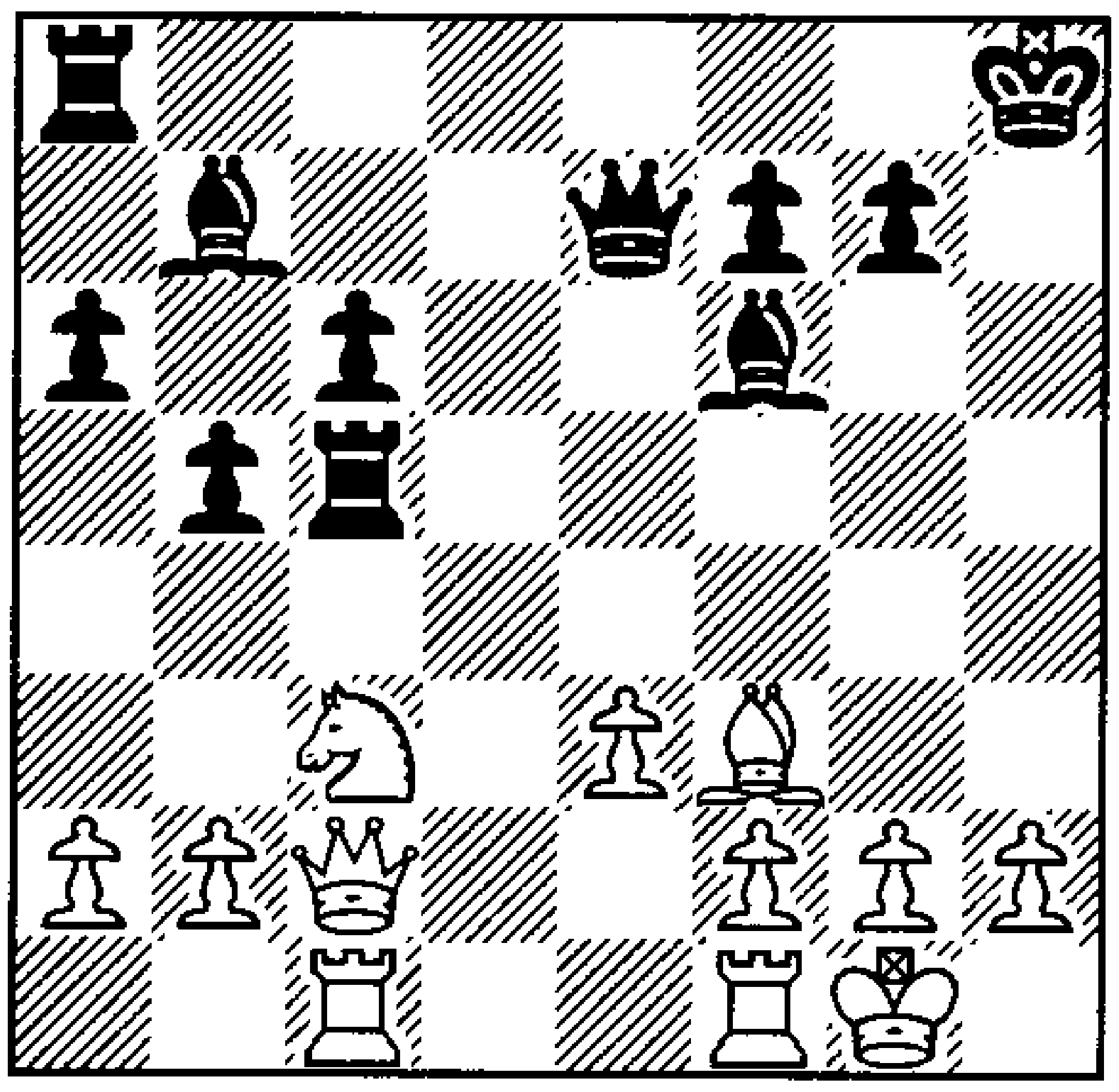
16...e5

16...c5!? comes into consideration. In a game between two little-known German players (Seitz-Sprecher, Berlin 1920) Black equalised after 17 ♗xb7 (17 dxc5 ♗xc3+ 18 bxc3 ♖ac8 19 0-0 ♗xe4 20 ♕xe4 ♖xc5 or 19 ♖d1 ♗xe4 20 ♕xe4 ♕c6 with drawing chances) 17...♕xb7 18 ♕e4 ♕xe4 19 ♘xe4 cxd4 20 ♘xf6 gxf6 21 exd4 ♖ed8 22 ♔e2 ♖xd4. I would have preferred 18 ♘e4!? cxd4 19 ♘xf6 gxf6 20 0-0 with the initiative, but with no guarantee of success.

17 dxe5 ♖xe5!

By activating his rook, Black gains some ompensation for the pawn. After 17...♗xe5?! 8 ♖d1 ♕e7 19 ♗f3 c5 20 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 21 -0 White has a 'free ride'.

8 0-0 ♕e7 (with the threat of 19...b4) **19 ♗f3 ♖c5!**



20 ♕e2

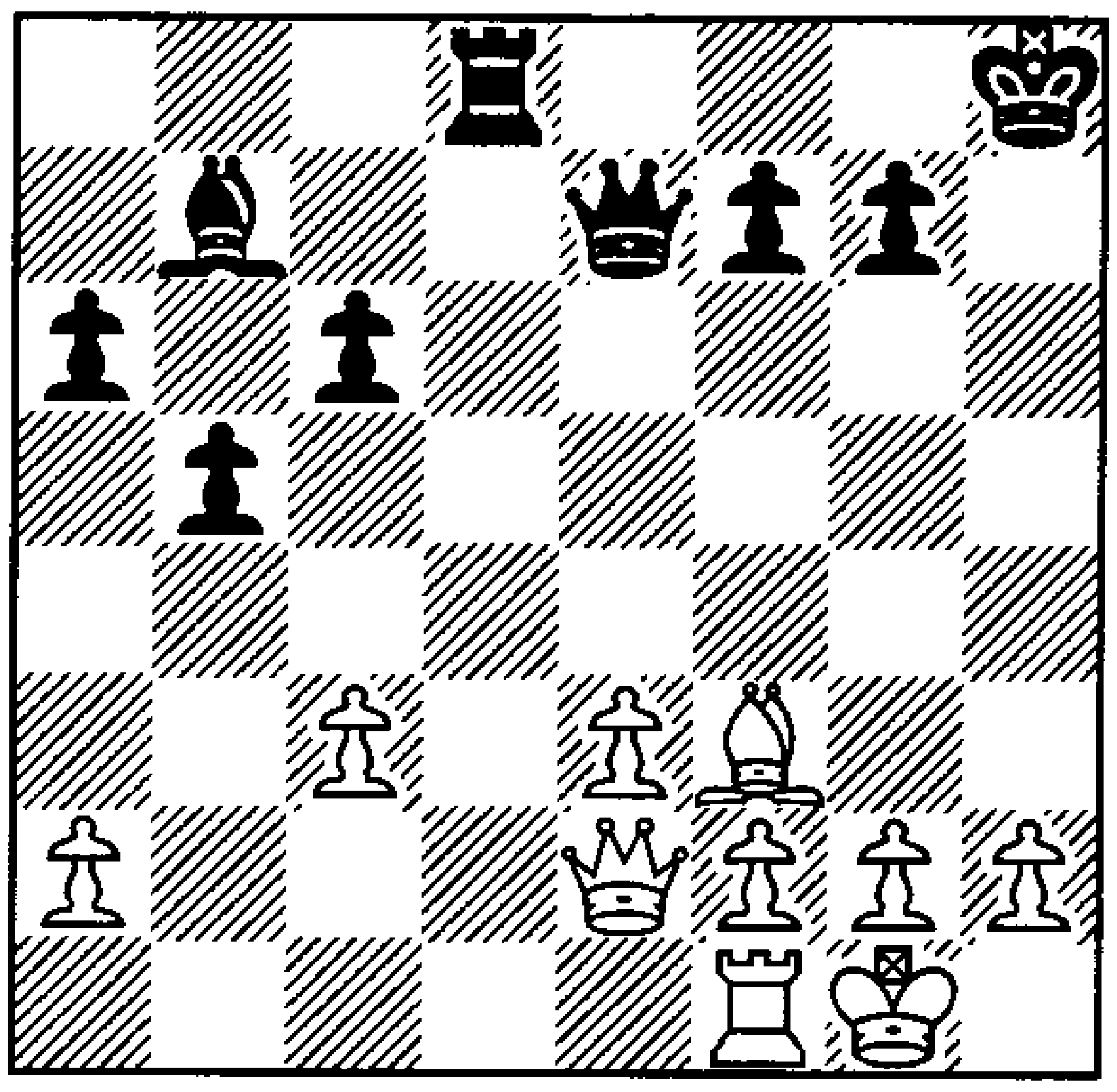
20 ♕b3!? a5 21 ♖fd1 ♖c4 is interesting. Although the commentators give here a 'with counterplay' sign, after 22 ♖d2! a4 (22...♗c8 23 ♕d1!) 23 ♕d1 the threat of ♖d7 sets Black unpleasant problems: 23...a3 (23...♗c8? 24 ♘xb5) 24 bxa3! ♗xc3 25 ♖d7 ♕f6 26 ♖xb7 ♖xa3 27 ♖d7 etc.

20...♗xc3 21 ♖xc3?!

Now 21 bxc3! was simply essential. Some criticised this because of 21...♗c8 22 ♖fd1 ♗e6, but after 23 ♖d4! and ♕d2 White seizes control of the d-file and can calmly begin an attack: the c3-pawn is inaccessible to Black, and it is unfavourable for him to exchange on d4 – in short, the position is a technical one.

Therefore 21...♕f6! is better, when 22 ♖fd1!? ♖xc3 23 ♖xc3 ♕xc3 24 ♗e4 is tempting, with an attack in a position with equal material. But in order to win here, considerable effort and inventiveness are required of White, and this is precisely what Rubinstein was aiming to avoid! He tried everything possible to simplify the position and in the end he overdid it: too many pieces were whisked off the board sooner that they should have been...

21...♖xc3 22 bxc3 ♖d8

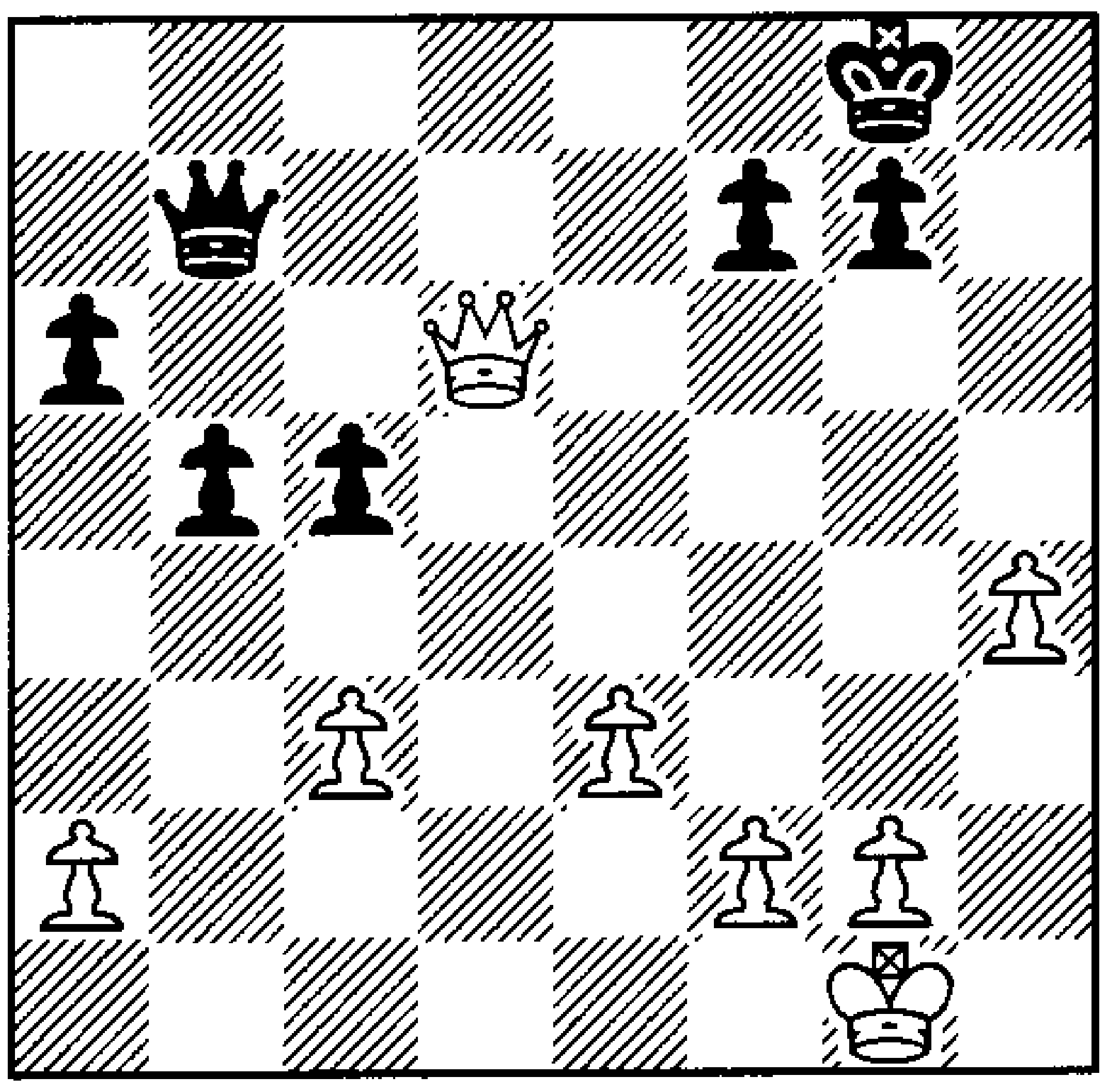


23 ♖d1

'White has nothing else. He cannot leave his opponent with the only open file.' (Tarrasch) Apparently Rubinstein was hoping to win the queen endgame, but from afar he underestimated the resulting problems. It would very much appear that the win has already been finally missed.

23...♖xd1+ 24 ♕xd1 ♔g8 25 h4 c5 (but not 25...♕xh4? 26 ♕d7 winning the bishop) **26 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 27 ♕d6**

27 ♕d8+ ♔h7 28 ♕d3+ ♔g8 would also have hardly promised anything.



'The queen endgame is very favourable for White. Firstly, he is a pawn up, but this is not the main thing. It is well known that in queen endgames, passed pawns are especially important. A strong passed pawn is usually able to neutralise even a big material advantage. Secondly, White's queen is more active than Black's and it controls most of the important central squares. Thirdly, the position of the white king is more secure. How then should Black continue in this difficult situation?' (Keres)

27...b4!

This is how: it is much easier for Black to create a passed pawn than White. 27...c4? was bad because of 28 f3! b4 (28...a5? 29 ♕d8+; 28...♔h7 29 a3!) 29 cxb4 ♕c8 30 ♕d2 c3 31 ♕c2 ♕c4 32 a3 (Keres). Also dubious was the passive 27...♕c8?! 28 e4 ♔h7 29 f3 ♔g8 30 ♔f2 ♔h7 31 g4 etc.

28 ♕xc5?

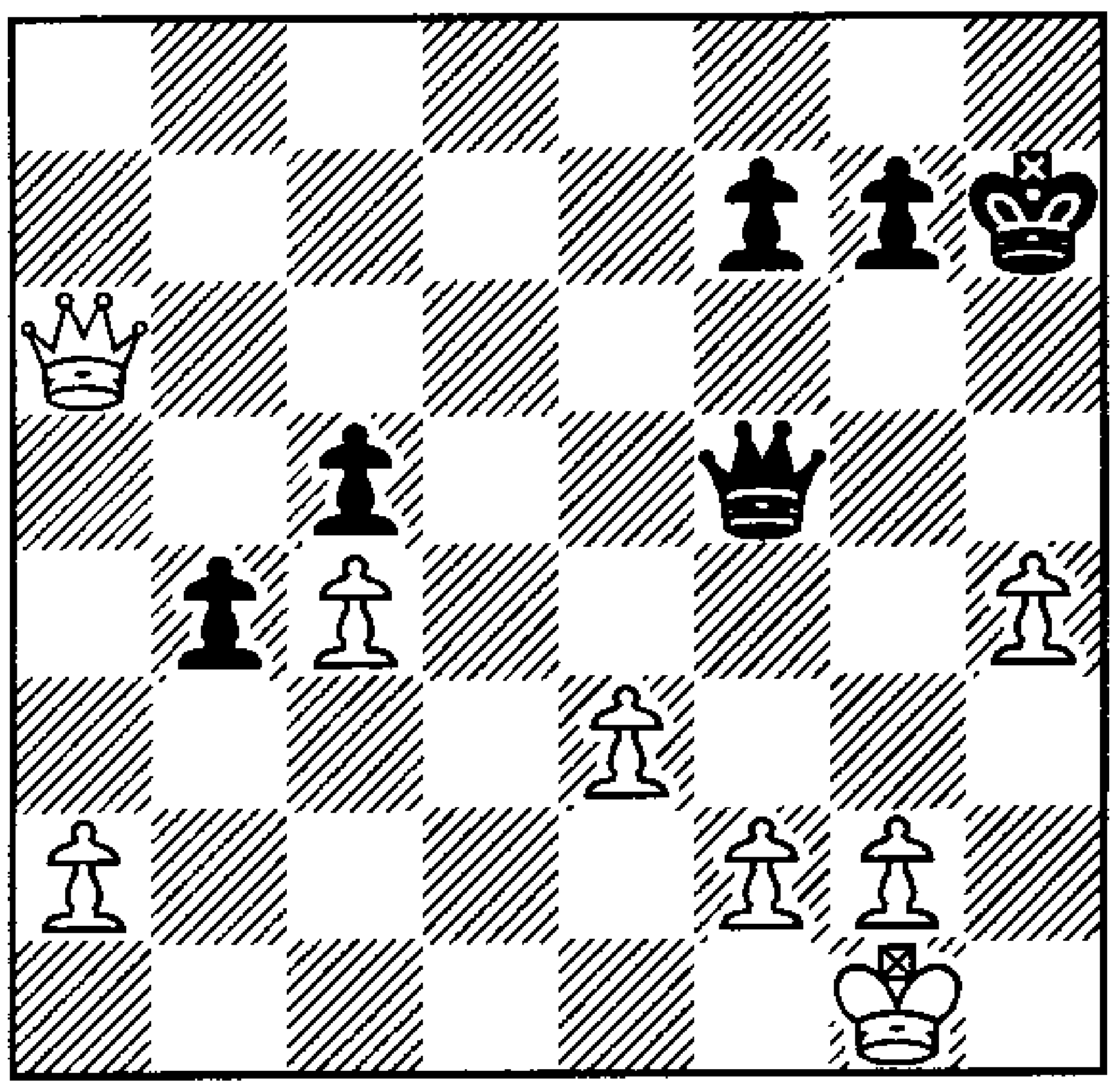
The final mistake, leading to a rapid draw. But what should White do? If 28 cxb4, then 28...♕xb4! (inferior is 28...cxb4?! 29 ♕c5! ♕e4 30 ♕c8+ ♔h7 31 ♕xa6 ♕xh4) 29 ♕xa6 c4, and the strong passed c-pawn saves Black, for example: 30 ♕a8+ ♔h7 31 ♕e4+ ♔g8 32 ♕e8+ ♔h7 33 ♕xf7 c3.

Tarrasch in the tournament book, and later Keres in the magazine *Shakhmaty v SSSR* (1964 No.3 – for an English translation cf. *The Art of the Middlegame* by Keres and Kotov [Penguin 1964]) recommended 28 c4! as the best chance. And indeed, now both 28...a5? 29 ♕d8+ ♔h7 30 ♕xa5 and 28...b3? 29 axb3 ♕xb3 30 ♕xa6 are bad. But Black has other ways of defending:

1) 28...♕e4?! 29 ♕xc5! (after 29 ♕xa6 ♔h7! it is not apparent how White can strengthen his position) 29...♕b1+ 30 ♔h2 ♕xa2 31 ♕xb4 ♕xf2 32 ♕e7, 'and the c-pawn cannot be stopped.' (Keres) Let us check this: 32...f6 33 ♕e4! (but not 33 ♔h3?! ♕f5+ 34 ♔g3 ♔h7 35 c5 ♕g6+ drawing) 33...f5 34 ♕e7 f4 35 ♕e8+ ♔h7 36 ♕e4+ ♔g8 37 exf4 ♕xh4+ 38 ♔g1 with winning chances;

2) 28...♕a7!? 29 g4 (29 ♕d8+ ♔h7 30 ♕a5 ♕e7! 31 ♕xa6 ♕e4 – the same as after 29 ♕xa6 ♔h7! in the first variation) 29...a5 30 h5 a4 31 g5 b3 32 g6 ♕a8 33 axb3 a3, repelling the attack: 34 gxf7+ (but not 34 ♕d7?? a2! 35 gxf7+ ♔f8 winning) 34...♔xf7 35 ♕g6+ ♔g8 36 h6 ♕a7 with a level position;

3) 28...♕c8!? (with the threat of 29...a5) 29 ♕b6 ♕f5! (29...♔h7? 30 e4!) 30 ♕xa6 ♔h7!



Analysis diagram

'The conversion of the two extra pawns is very difficult,' writes Keres, and he gives these variations:

a) 31 ♕a4 ♕b1+ 32 ♔h2 ♕f5 or 32...♕b2!?, and it is not apparent how White can conveniently defend the f2-pawn;

b) 31 ♕a5 ♕e5! (threatening 32...♕a1+ and 33...b3) 32 ♕a4 ♕a1+ 33 ♔h2 ♕b2, transposing into a position that has already been examined; I should like to add 32 ♕a8 ♕a1+! 33 ♔h2 ♕e5+ 34 g3 ♕e6 with adequate counterplay (35 ♕d5?? ♕xd5 36 cxd5 ♔g8 wins for Black);

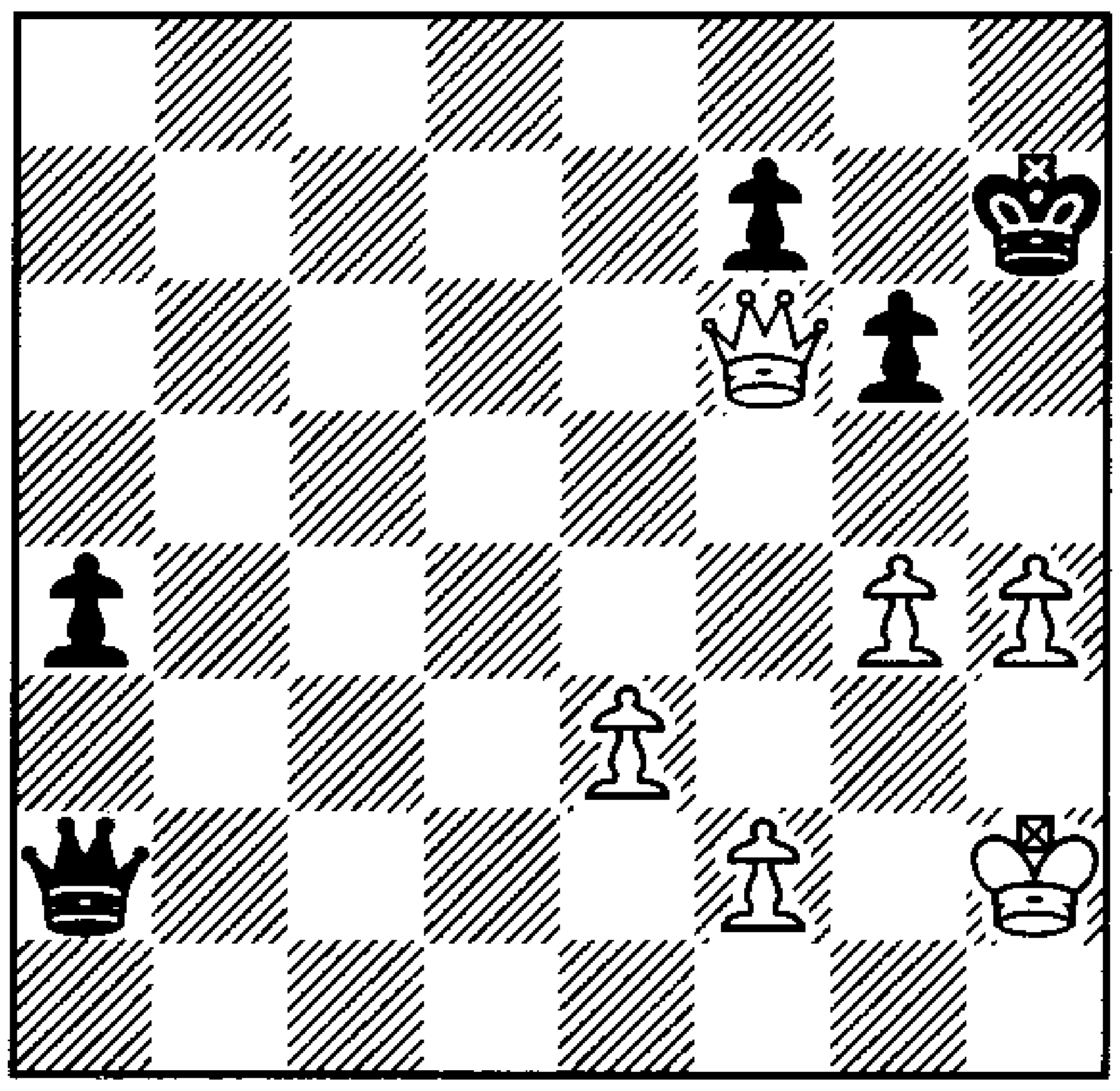
c) 31 ♕a7!? (the most dangerous) 31...♕e5!? 32 ♕xf7 ♕a1+ 33 ♔h2 ♕xa2 with counterplay, but the quiet 31...f6 32 e4 ♕e5 is also possible – in my opinion, Keres is right, although this position contains numerous nuances: 33 ♕f7 ♕a1+ 34 ♔h2 ♕xa2 35 ♕h5+ ♔g8 36 ♕xc5 b3 37 ♕c8+ ♔h7 38 ♕f5+ ♔h8 39 c5 b2 40 c6 ♕c4 41 ♕c8+ ♔h7 42 ♕b7 ♕xe4 43 ♕xb2 ♕xc6, and the queen endgame with 'three against two' is objectively drawn.

'Thus analysis shows that even after 28 c4! Black could have played on, retaining excellent drawing chances,' Keres sums up. 'It is a pity that Rubinstein did not decide on this, and that Capablanca's wonderful idea remained unnoticed by the chess world.'

28...bxc3 29 ♕xc3 ♕b1+ 30 ♔h2 ♕xa2

The passed a-pawn together with the attack on the f2-pawn gives Black an easy draw.

31 ♕c8+ ♔h7 32 ♕f5+ g6 33 ♕f6 a5!? (Capa is no longer satisfied with the drawing 33...♕e6) **34 g4 a4**



35 h5! gxh5!

Of course, not 35...♕e6? 36 hxg6+ and not 35...a3?! 36 h6 ♔xh6?? (36...♕b2!) 37 ♕h8+ ♔g5 38 ♔g3 and ♕h4 mate.

36 ♕f5+

Again I agree with Keres: 'Rubinstein is right to give up any further attempts to win. He forces a draw, since after 36 gxh5 ♕e6! there is a risk of losing.'

36...♔g7 37 ♕g5+ (37 gxh5 a3 38 e4 ♕b2!) **37...♔h7 38 ♕xh5+ ♔g7 ½-½**

'It is amazing with what skill Capablanca was able to draw this bad endgame.' (Keres)

Was it an accident that Akiba missed the win? I think not: remember his error against Capa in San Sebastian – 38 ♗d5? (*Game No.64*), and also other errors, which increased with the years... After all, Rubinstein was first and foremost a great thinker and researcher in chess, whereas at the board he acted rather conservatively, and was inferior to Capablanca and Lasker in the purely playing aspects. In order to withstand the enormous tension and overcome these exceptionally tenacious fighters, you had to have, like a cat, nine lives!

After this draw, a vexing one for White and a fortunate one for Black, the paths of the two opponents diverged in different directions. The unsettled Rubinstein suffered a heavy defeat against Lasker (*Game No.66*) and then, after a bad oversight, against Alekhine – and produced the greatest surprise of St Petersburg 1914: he did not finish in the top five places. Whereas the inspired Capablanca set a fantastic pace (6 out of 7!) and won the preliminary tournament by a big margin.

The following win by the Cuban was awarded the first brilliancy prize, controversially beating the well-known game Nimzowitsch-Tarrasch with bishop sacrifices on h2 and g2 (*Game No.51*). However, I am not sure that this decision of the jury was correct: Capablanca's opponent played the opening really very badly.

Game 83

J.R.Capablanca-O.Bernstein

St Petersburg 1914,
preliminary tournament
Queen's Gambit D51

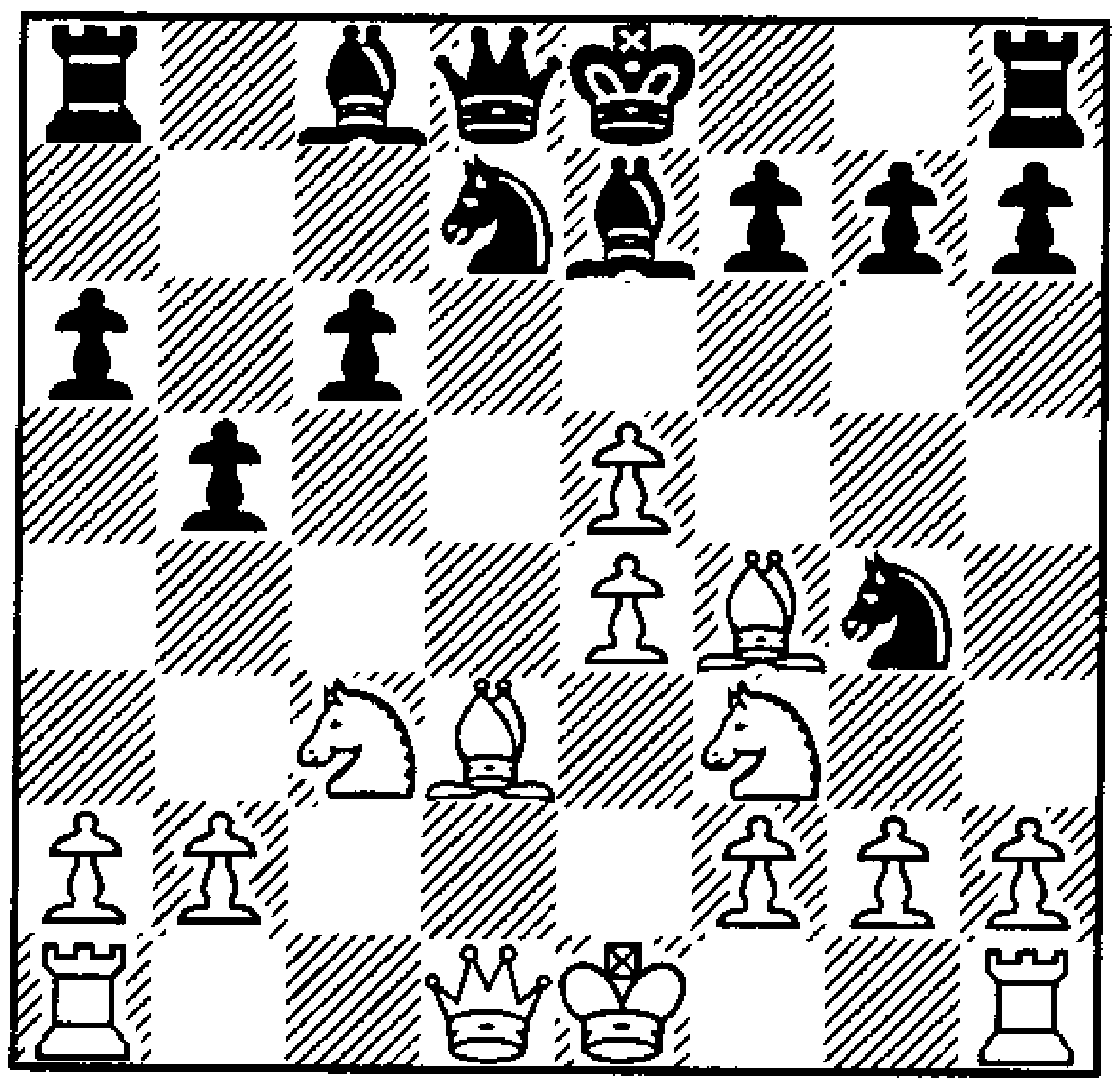
1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 c4 e6 4 ♘c3 ♘bd7 5 ♗g5 ♗e7 6 e3 c6?!

This is Bernstein's favourite plan with ...c7-c6, ...dxc4, ...b7-b5, ...a7-a6, ...c6-c5 and ...♗b7, which was also tried by Capablanca in the preceding game with Rubinstein (incidentally the latter also made use of this sensible idea in developing the Meran Variation). However, 6...0-0 is more accurate, and only after 7 ♖c1 – 7...c6, while if 7 ♗d3, then immediately 7...c5!

7 ♗d3 dxc4 8 ♗xc4 b5 9 ♗d3 a6 10 e4 e5?

A dubious venture, which is accurately refuted by Capablanca. The thematic 10...c5 is correct, and if 11 e5 – 11...♘d5! (but not 11...cxd4? 12 exf6 gxf6 13 ♘xd4 fxg5 14 ♘xe6! – 14 ♗e4!? – 14...fxe6 15 ♕h5+ ♔f8 16 ♕f3+ ♔g7 17 ♕xa8 ♘c5 18 ♗e2 ♗b7 19 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 20 f3) 12 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 (12...♘xc3? 13 ♗xd8 ♘xd1 14 ♖xd1 ♔xd8 15 ♗e4 wins) 13 ♘xd5 exd5 14 0-0 c4 15 ♗c2 0-0 with a somewhat inferior, but acceptable game.

11 dxe5 ♘g4 12 ♗f4!



12...♗c5?

For some reason no one has pointed out that this is also a mistake, and possibly already the decisive one. After 12...♕c7! White would have retained the advantage only by 13 ♖c1! (13 0-0 ♘gxe5 14 ♖c1 ♗d6; 13 ♕c2 ♘gxe5 14 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 15 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 16 ♘xb5 0-0 17 ♘c3 ♗d6 with compensation for the pawn) 13...♘gxe5 14 ♘d5! ♕a5+ 15 ♔f1 cxd5 16 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 17 ♗xe5 f6 18 ♗f4 ♗e6 19 exd5 ♗xd5 20 ♕h5+ ♗f7 21 ♕f3 0-0 22 ♕e4 ♗g6 23 ♕e6+ ♖f7 24 ♗xg6 hxg6 25 g3 etc.

13 0-0 ♕c7

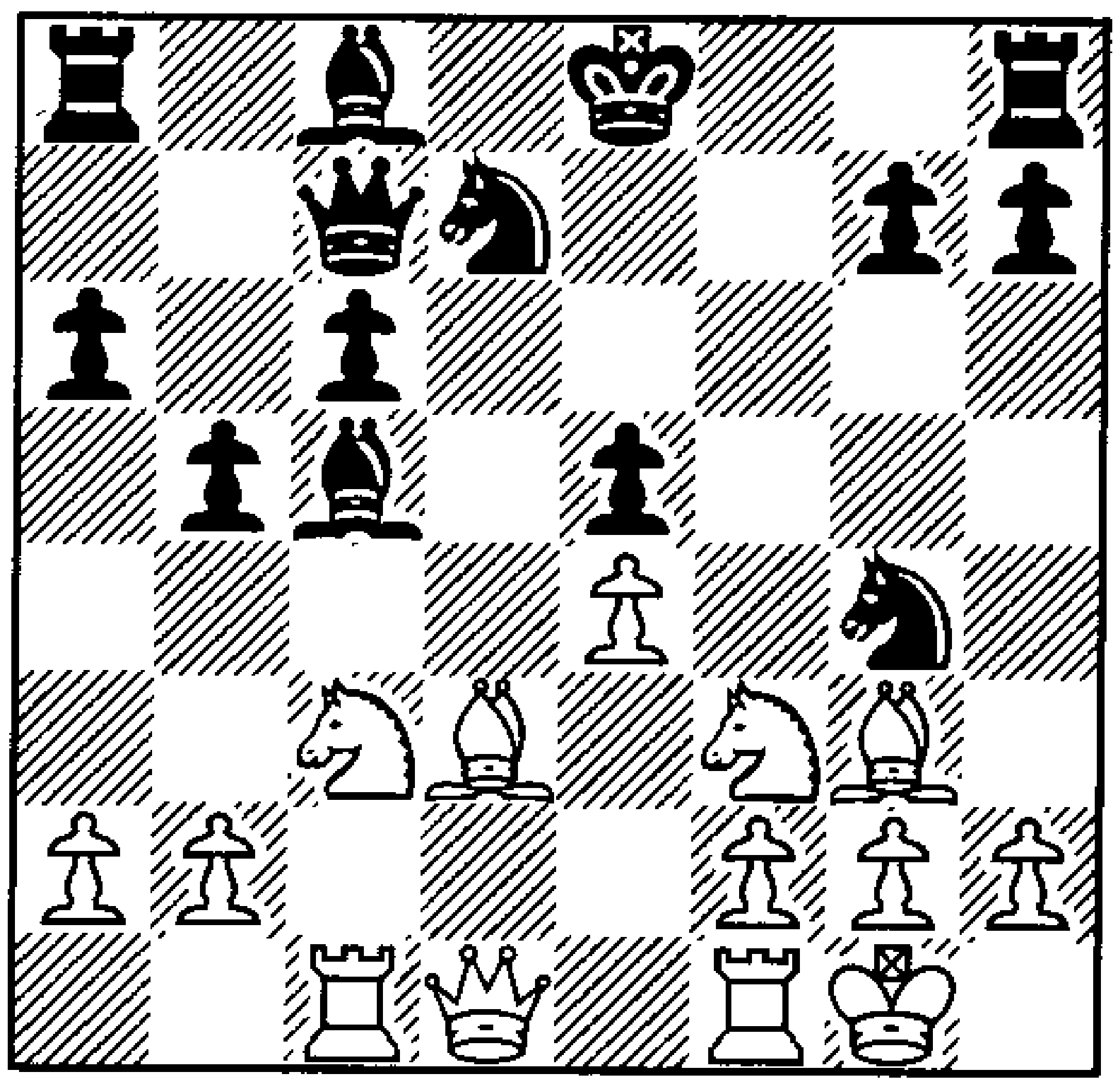
Black rejected 13...♕e7 because of 14 e6!, although after 14...fxe6 (forced: 14...♕xe6? 15 ♘g5) 15 e5 0-0 16 ♕d2 things are perhaps not as bad for him as in the game.

14 ♖c1 f6

'Necessary, since if 14...♘gxe5? there would have followed 15 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 16 ♘xb5! cxb5 17 b4 with a winning position for White.' (Panov) This is hardly so in view of 17...♗g4! 18 ♗e2 ♘f3+ 19 ♗xf3 ♕xf4, but 17 ♕h5! does in fact win.

15 ♗g3 (15 b4!? fxe5 16 ♗g3 would have come to the same thing) **15...fxe5**

In the event of 15...♘gxe5 White could have continued the attack by 16 ♘xe5 fxe5 17 ♕b3.' (Panov) But what about, say, 17...♕d6! 18 ♖fd1 etc? I prefer 17 b4!? ♗xb4 18 ♘d5 ♕d6 19 ♘xb4 ♕xb4 20 ♖xc6 with an obvious advantage.

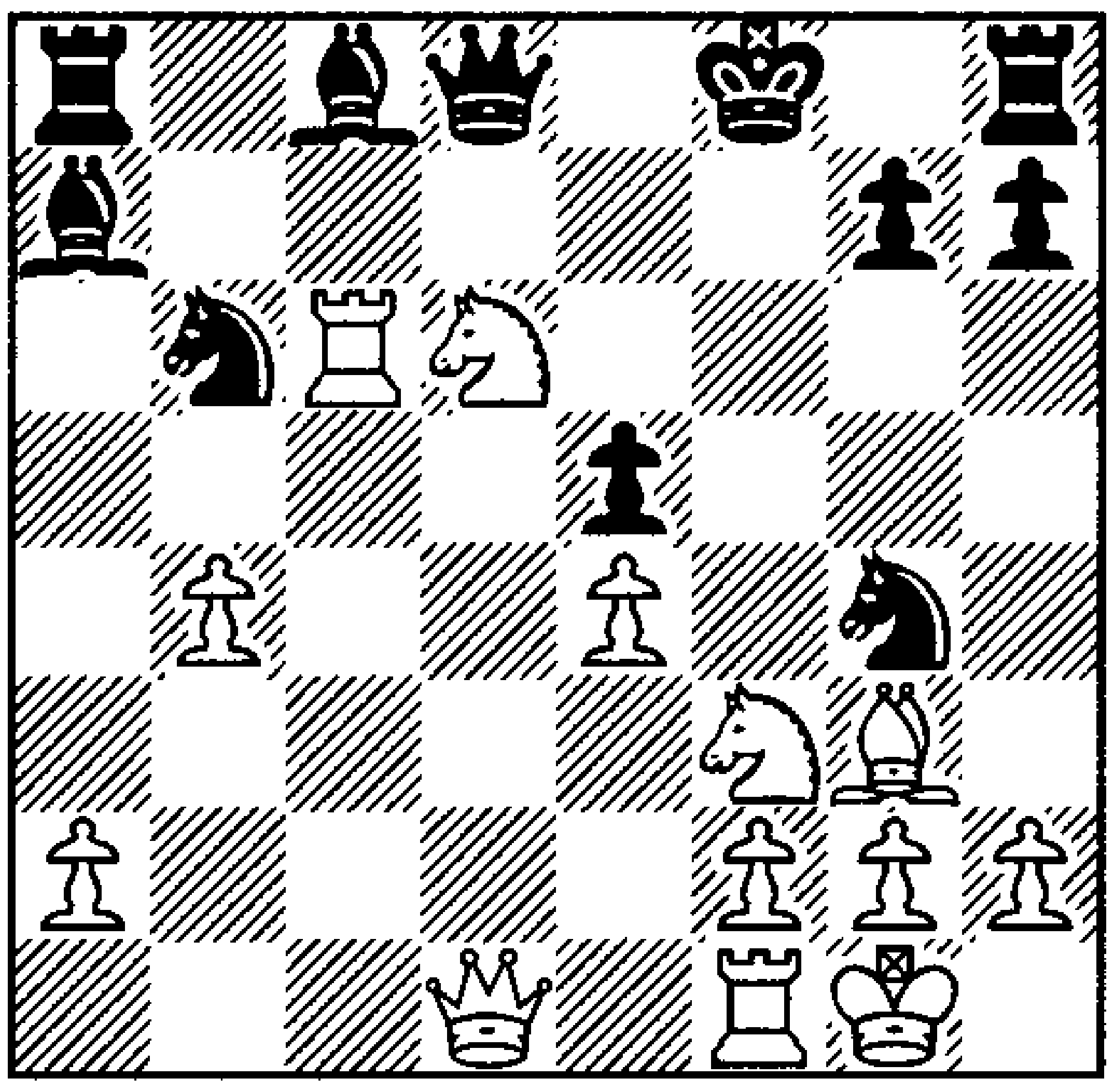


16 b4! ♗a7

Also bad are both 16...♗xb4 because of 17

♘d5 ♕d6 18 ♘xb4 ♕xb4 19 ♖xc6 0-0 20 ♗c2, and 16...♗d6 17 ♗xb5 axb5 18 ♘xb5 cxb5 19 ♖xc7 ♗xc7 20 ♕d5 ♖a6 21 ♖c1 ♘gf6 22 ♕xb5+. After regaining the pawn, Black is too far behind in development...

17 ♗xb5! (as Capa writes, 'it is now time to carry on the assault') **17...axb5 18 ♘xb5 ♕d8 19 ♘d6+ ♔f8 20 ♖xc6 ♘b6**



21 ♗h4!

'This is to my mind the finest move in the game. Before making it I had to plough through a mass of combinations which totalled at least one hundred moves. The text combination is one of them, and I had to see through the whole thing to the end before I decided on this move. Otherwise the simple continuation 21 ♘xe5 would have been adopted.' (Capablanca)

21...♕d7 (if 21...♘f6 the simplest reply is 22 ♘xe5 ♕e7 23 ♗xf6 gxf6 24 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 25 ♘d7+) **22 ♘xc8!**

A clear plan, although, in my opinion, the line 22 b5!? ♗a6 23 ♘g5 ♗xb5 24 ♖c7 is also strong.

22...♕xc6 23 ♕d8+

Subsequently the commentators pointed out a quicker way to win – 23 ♗e7+! ♔e8 24 ♕d8+ ♔f7 25 ♘g5+ ♔g6 26 ♕xh8 ♘f6 27 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 28 h4!, or 23...♔f7 24 ♘g5+ ♔g6 25 ♕xg4 ♕xc8 26 ♘e6+ ♔f7 27 ♕xg7+ ♔xe6 28 ♖d1!

23...♕e8 (not 23...♔f7? 24 ♘d6+) **24 ♗e7+ ♔f7 25 ♘d6+ ♔g6 26 ♘h4+ ♔h5**

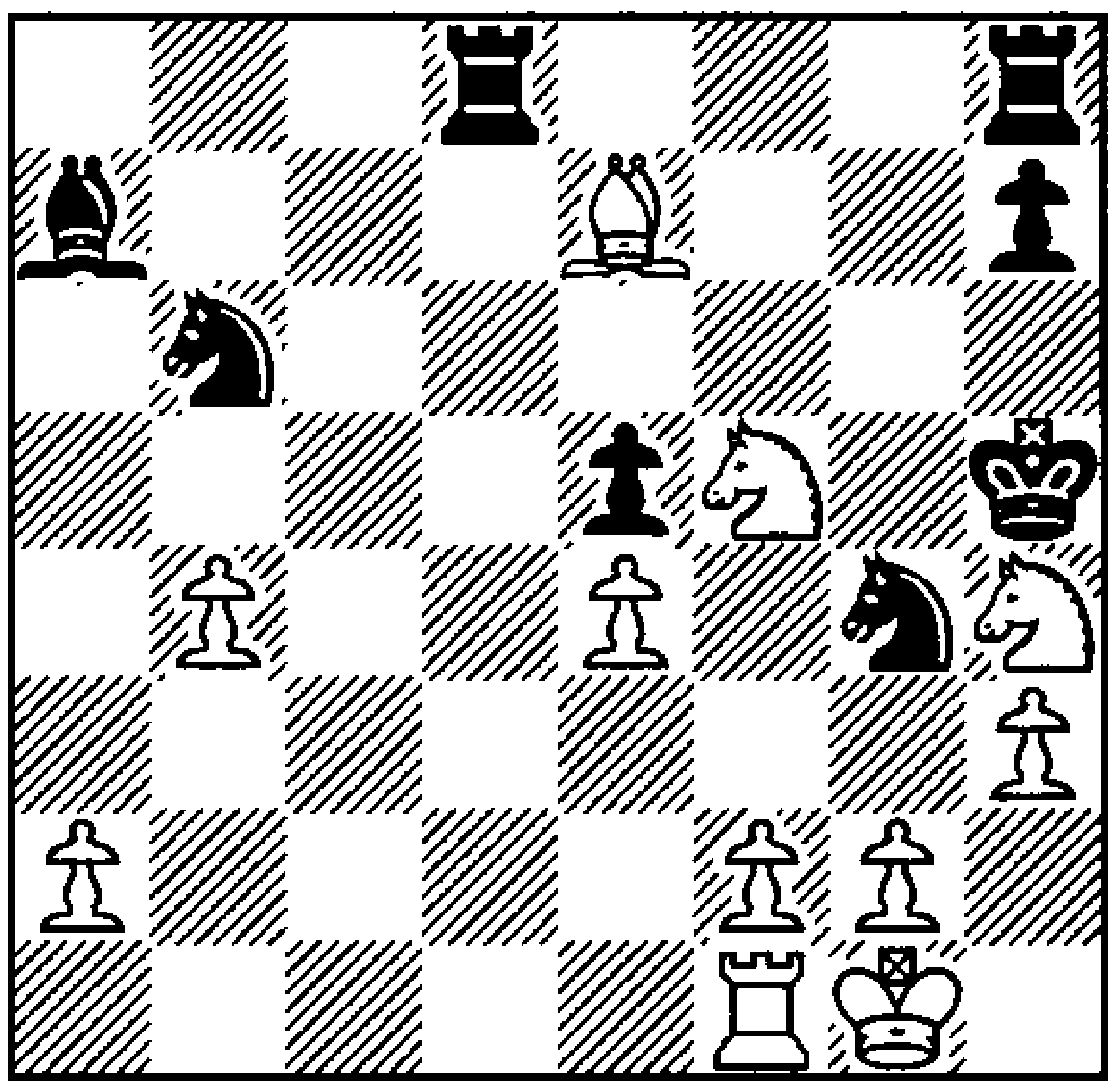
If 26...♔h6, then 27 ♘df5+ ♔h5 28 ♘g3+ ♔h6 29 ♗g5 mate.

27 ♘xe8 ♖xd8

'The resistance would by no means have been prolonged by 27...♖xe8 28 ♕d1 with the threat of 29 h3!' (Panov)

28 ♘xg7+ ♔h6 29 ♘gf5+ ♔h5 30 h3!

'The climax of the combination started with 21 ♗h4. White is still threatening mate, and the best way to avoid it is for Black to give back all the material he is ahead and remain three pawns behind.' (Capablanca)



30...♘c8 (but not 30...♖d7? 31 hxg4+ ♔xg4 32 f3+ ♔f4 33 g3 mate!) **31 hxg4+ ♔xg4 32 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 33 g3 ♖d2 34 ♔g2! ♖e2**

Or 34...♖xa2 35 ♘f3 winning. Again Bernstein 'forgets' to resign...

35 a4 ♘b6 36 ♘e3+ ♔h5 37 a5 ♘d7 38 ♘hf5 ♘f6 39 b5 ♗d4 40 ♔f3 ♖a2 41 a6 ♗a7 42 ♖c1 ♖b2 43 g4+ ♔g6 44 ♖c7 ♖xf2+ 45 ♔xf2 ♘xg4+ 46 ♔f3 1-0

Not so spectacular, but no less instructive, was Capa's win over Janowski. Playing through this game, one is again struck by the difference in class between the young Cuban and his eminent opponent. To evaluate correctly Capablanca's role at this stage in the development of chess, it should be remembered that here he was playing one of the best masters at the start of the century, and a participant in a match for the world championship.

Game 84
J.R.Capablanca-D.Janowski
St Petersburg 1914,
preliminary tournament
Ruy Lopez C68

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗xc6

White operates as simply as possible, remembering San Sebastian, where Capa miraculously escaped, after coming under a crushing attack (*Game No.77*). Dry, tedious play sickened Janowski – back in the match with Lasker (Paris 1909) he played the Exchange Variation badly with Black, and this had obviously been taken into account by Capablanca.

4...dxc6 5 ♘c3

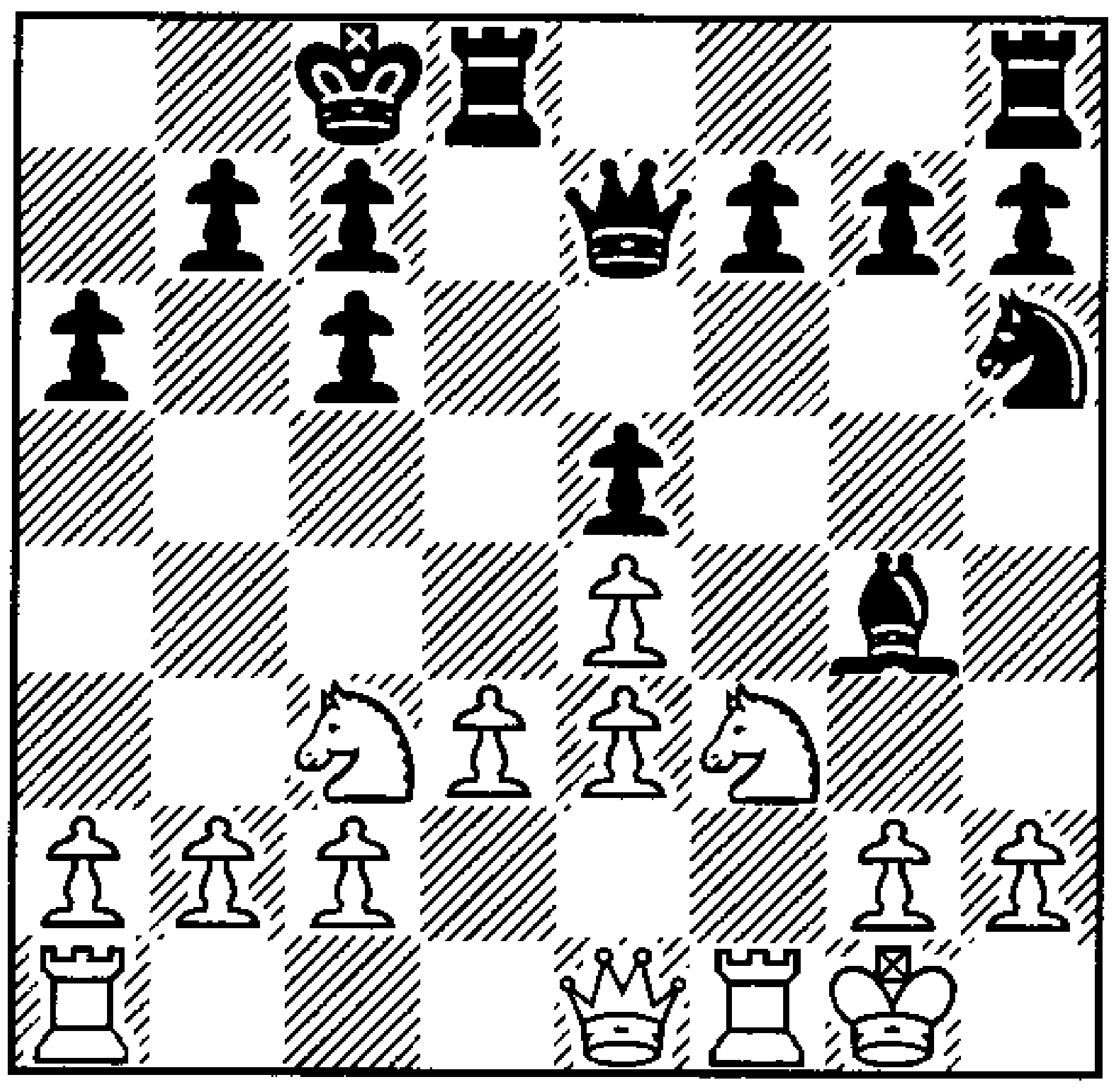
In the final tournament Lasker 'swindled' Capa with the help of 5 d4 (*Game No.68*), and the time for 5 0-0! had not yet then arrived.

5...♗c5?! (the usual 5...f6 is sounder) **6 d3 ♗g4 7 ♗e3 ♗xe3?!** (7...♕e7) **8 fxe3 ♕e7?!**

It would have been better to play the knight here after 8...f6!?

9 0-0 0-0-0?! (9...♘h6 and ...0-0) **10 ♕e1 ♘h6?!**

Of course, 10...f6 is more accurate, but that was how they played chess then! Slowly, without himself being aware of it, Janowski loses the game...



11 ♖b1!!

Not wasting time on a2-a3. This plan of attack has become a classic one in such positions. For example: 5 0-0 ♕d6 6 d3 f6 7 ♗e3 ♗g4 (7...♘e7 8 ♘bd2 ♗e6 9 b4!) 8 ♘bd2 0-0-0 9 ♖b1! ♘e7 10 b4 g5 11 a4 ♘g6 12 b5! etc. (Mecking-Korchnoi, Augusta 12th match-game 1974).

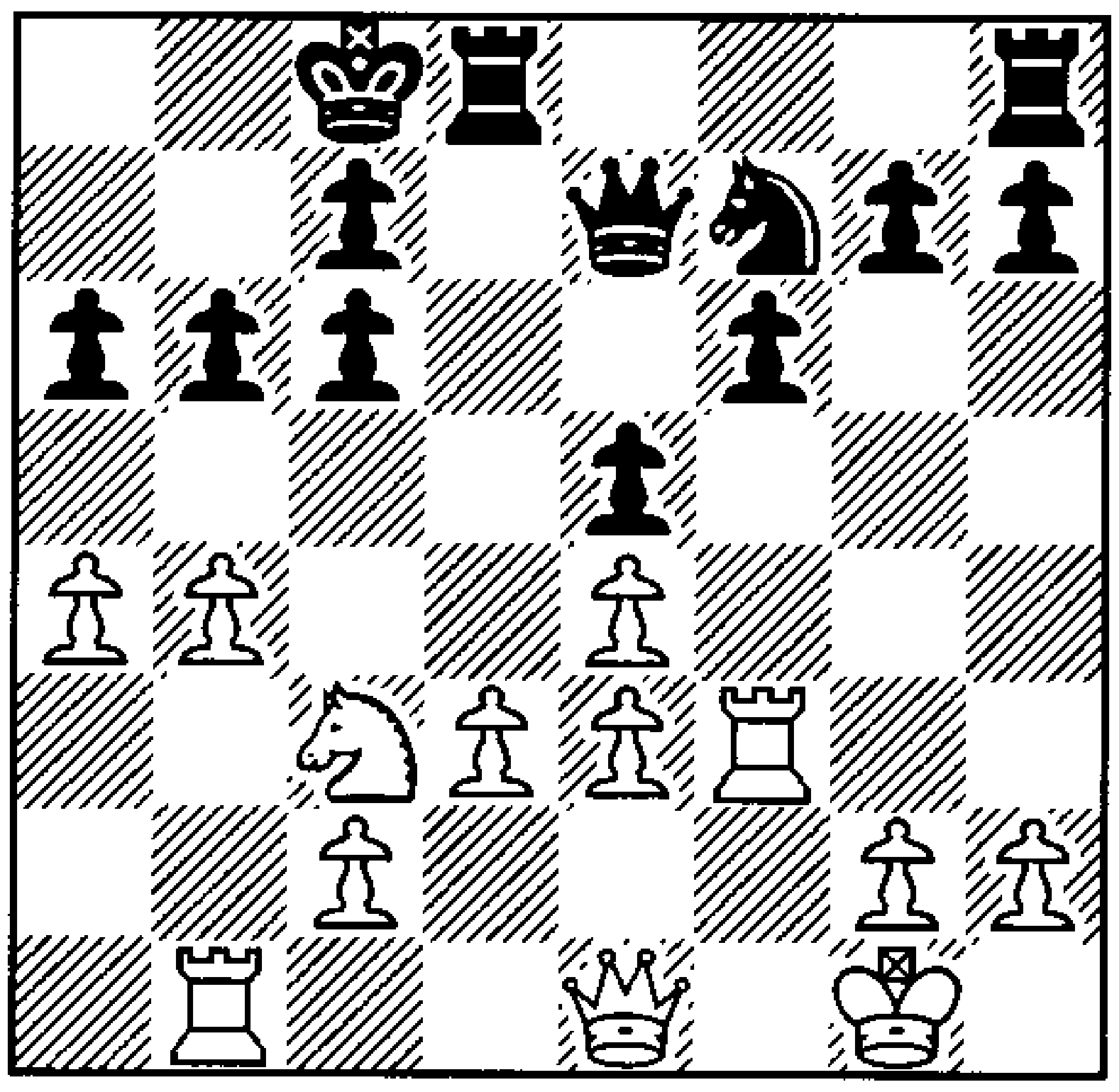
12...f6 12 b4 ♘f7?!

Possibly the only defence was 12...♗e6! 13 a4 b6 14 b5 cxb5 15 axb5 a5, in order to control the d5-square. But Janowski simply does not yet realise how bad his position is.

13 a4 ♗xf3

'He simplifies, hoping to lighten White's attack.' (Capablanca) 13...♗e6?! is now too late in view of 14 b5 cxb5 15 axb5 a5 16 b6! winning.

14 ♖xf3 b6?



'He is forced to do this in order to avoid the breaking up of his queenside pawns. The only alternative would have been 14...b5, which on the face of it looks bad.' (Capablanca) 'Now the white knight occupies d5, and the game is strategically decided. The best chance of a defence was 14...b5 with the idea of ...♔b7 and ...♖a8.' (Panov) I think that Panov was right, although Black also has a bad position after 15 ♘e2! ♘g5 16 ♖f2 ♘e6 17 ♘c1.

15 b5! cxb5 16 axb5 a5 17 ♘d5 ♕c5 18 c4!

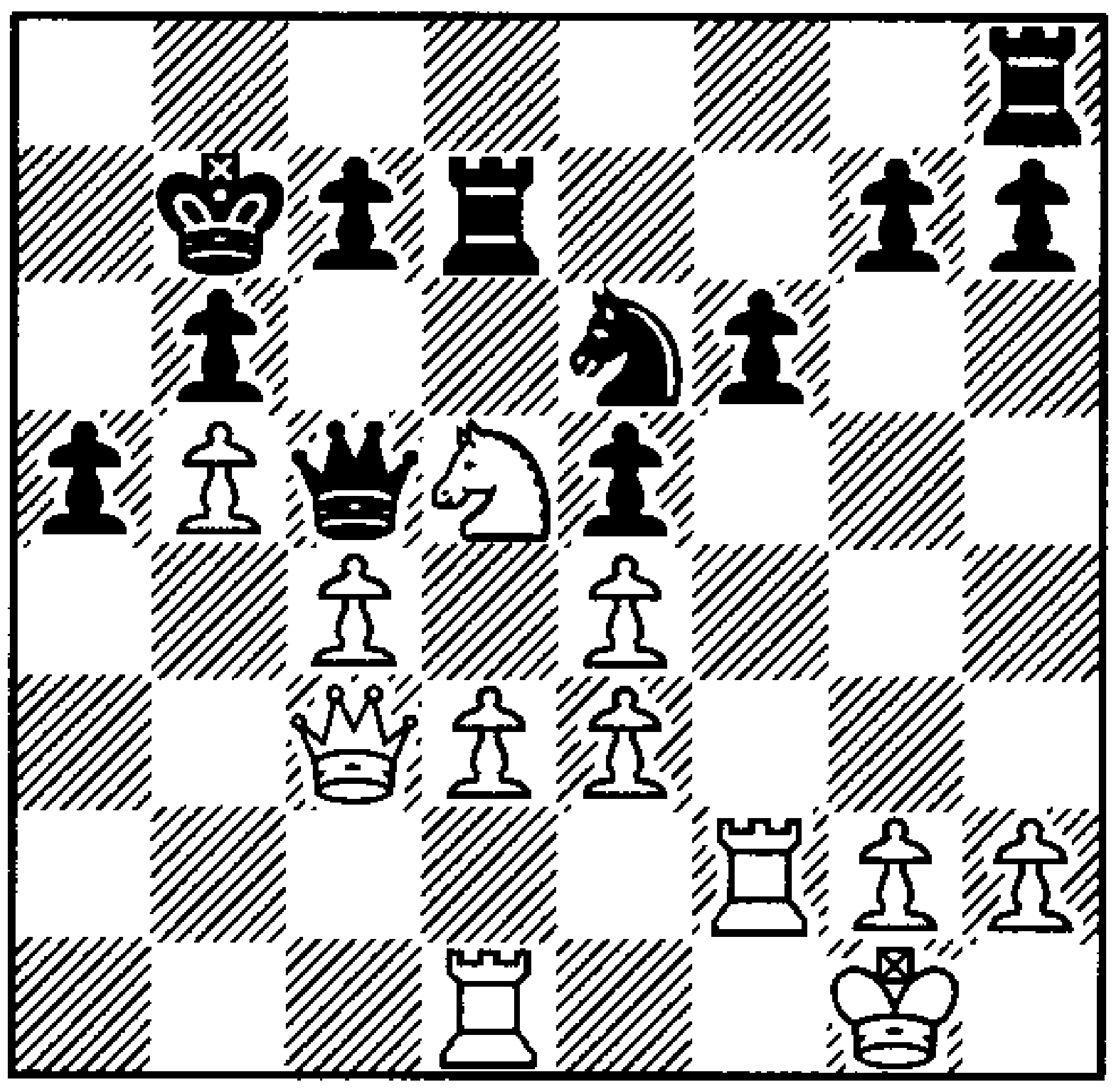
Supporting the knight and intending a simple and natural strategic plan with d3-d4 and c4-c5. Amazing: Black has not blundered, yet he can already resign!

18...♘g5 19 ♖f2!

But not 19 ♖f1 ♘e6 20 ♕c3? because of 20...♖xd5! 21 exd5 ♕xe3+ and ...♘c5.

19...♘e6 20 ♕c3 ♖d7 21 ♖d1! (21 ♖d2? ♖xd5!) **21...♔b7?!**

21...♔d8 was slightly more tenacious.



22 d4 ♕d6

'Also after 22...♕f8 the game is immediately decided by the same manoeuvre by White.' (Panov)

23 ♖c2! exd4 24 exd4 ♘f4 (this loses a piece, but there is no way of saving the game) **25 c5! ♘xd5 26 exd5 ♕xd5 27 c6+ ♔b8 28 cxd7 ♕xd7 29 d5 ♖e8 30 d6 cxd6 31 ♕c6 1-0**

'The impetuous Capablanca has gained a whole series of brilliant wins and now stands ahead of everyone,' Lasker wrote after the preliminary tournament. 'To score 8 out of 10 – that is no joke! Now he has the opportunity to show whether he can maintain the advantage he has gained.'

However, in the final a miracle of another sort occurred: Lasker, trailing by one and a half points, managed to defeat Capablanca (*Game No.68*), score 7 and of 8 and take first place! The Cuban, who also lost to Tarrasch (blundering a piece), finished half a point behind, while the third prize-winner Alekhine was 3½ behind... At the concluding banquet Capablanca maintained a brave face. He congratulated the world champion on his victory and apologised for his sharp letter of more than two years earlier regarding the conditions for the world championship match. In reply Lasker offered a toast to Capablanca's further successes, and they shook hands with each other in a sign of reconciliation.

'The fact that Capablanca took second place in this tournament, conceding the advantage to Lasker, must be put down exclusively to youthful flippancy,' Alekhine later wrote. 'Already then Capablanca was playing as well as Lasker...' It is well known that during the tournament, endless dinners, banquets and receptions were arranged in honour of the amicable and sociable Cuban and, before the decisive game with Tarrasch, he and Alekhine spent the entire evening making merry with friends and then they walked for a long time around St Petersburg, with its fairy-tale beauty of the white nights...

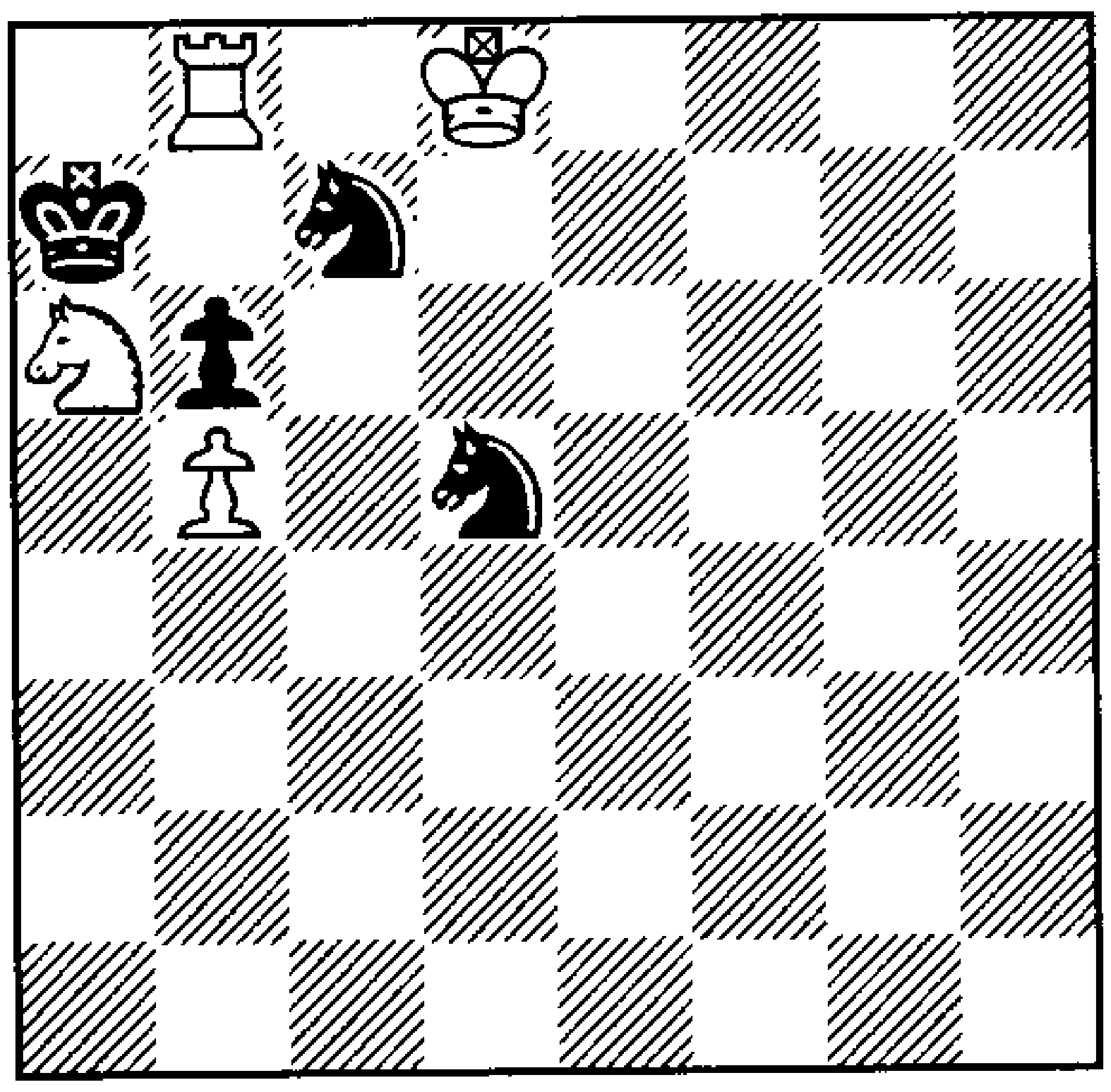
Capablanca's own summary was interesting: 'My poor physical condition and Lasker's superb form at the finish tell the tale, but at any rate it became evident that we stood above the rest of the competitors, and that only a match could decide who was the better of the two. I hope the match will come, the sooner the better, as I don't want to play an old man, but a master in the plenitude of his powers.'

It cannot be denied that this is a wish, worthy of a true gentleman! Alas, the First World War intervened...

The Marshall Counterattack

Nevertheless Lasker and Capablanca met once more before the War: in July 1914 in Berlin they played a blitz match of 10 games (at the rate of 5 seconds per move). As the world champion admitted, 'even with such severely restricted time, Capablanca hardly made any mistakes.' He was victorious in the match (6½-3½), winning in study-like fashion the following ending:

Game 85
J.R.Capablanca-Em.Lasker
Blitz game/composition, Berlin 1914



1 ♘xc7 ♘xc7 2 ♖a8+!! (but not 2 ♔xc7?? stalemate!) **2...♘xa8** (2...♔xa8 3 ♔xc7 ♔a7 4 ♔c6; 2...♔b7 3 ♖a7+!!) **3 ♔c8! 1-0**

Black resigned due to 4...♘c7 4 ♔xc7 etc.

However, it is hard to imagine what Black's move was before the diagram position. If it was ...♘a8-c7, then why not ...♘d5-c3 and ...♘xb5 with a dead draw? And what did White play before that?... At any event, the two players 'repaired' the position and published a joint study in the newspaper *Vossische Zeitung* (26 07.1914), where the black d5 knight was stationed on e6, and the white king on d7. (It is debateable whether the above 'game' actually took place, or whether it is entirely a composition.)

At that time the current and future world champions discussed the question of creating an International Chess Federation, of which the leading chess countries in Europe were in favour. But these plans were dashed by the war...

Capablanca returned to America and over the next five years gradually prepared for a match for the world crown, performing triumphantly in second-rate events. He won three New York tournaments (1915, 1916 and 1918), and at the start of the latter he produced, together with Marshall, another classic game.

Game 86
J.R.Capablanca-F.Marshall
New York 1918
Ruy Lopez C89

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6

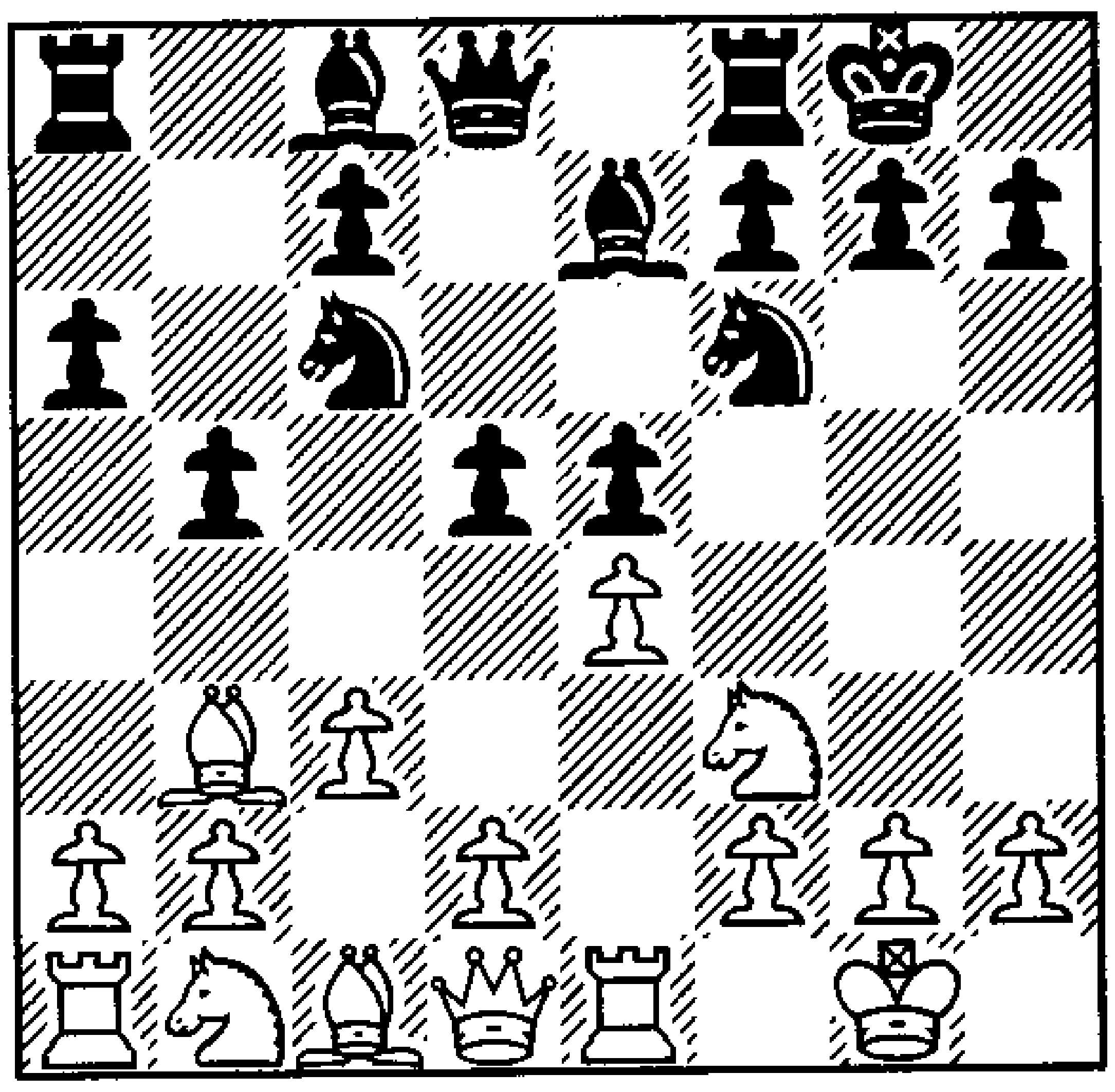
'My first surprise. For the first time in ten years Marshall allowed me to play a Ruy Lopez.' (Capablanca)

3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 0-0!?

'My second surprise. I now felt that Marshall had prepared something for me... The reason was that he had found a prepared a variation for me, and had kept it for two years, awaiting the opportunity of playing it in a tournament against me.' (Capablanca)

Incidentally, Marshall's idea was anticipated by the game Taubenhaus-Chigorin (Ostend 1905): 7...d6 8 c3 0-0 9 d3 ♗g4 10 ♘bd2 ♖e8 11 ♘f1 d5! 12 exd5 ♘xd5 13 h3 ♗h5 14 g4 ♗g6 15 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 16 ♖xe5 (a familiar picture!) 16...♘f6 17 d4 ♗d6 18 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 19 ♗e3 ♗e4! 20 f3 ♗b7 with excellent counterplay for the pawn.

8 c3 d5!? (here it is, the Marshall Attack!)



9 exd5 ♘xd5

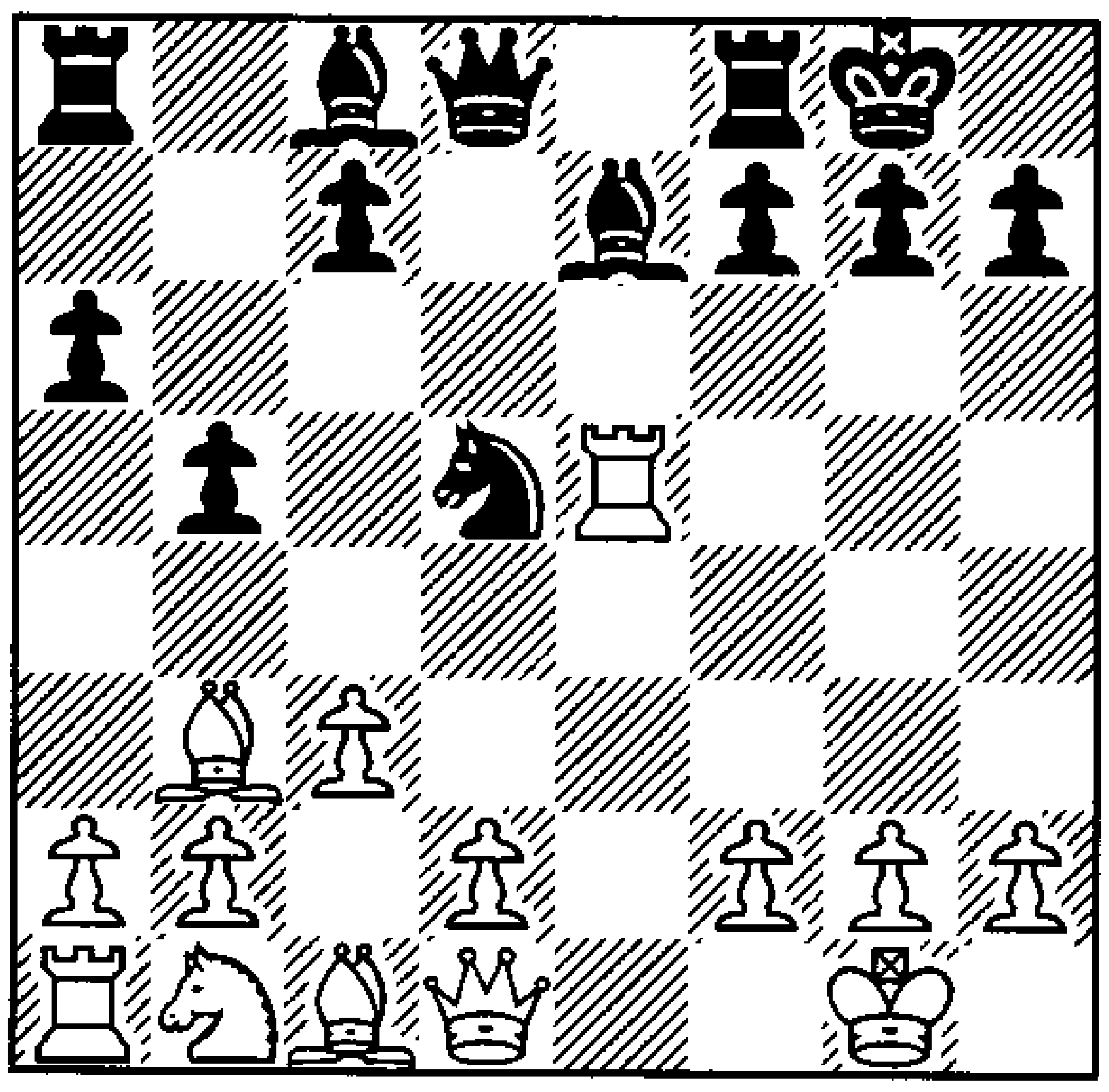
Later the intricate 9...e4 10 dxc6 exf3 11 ♕xf3 ♗g4 12 ♕g3 ♖e8 13 d4 ♗d6 14 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 was also tried.

10 ♘xe5

'The lust of battle had been aroused within me. I felt that my judgement and skill were being challenged... I decided that I was in honour bound, so to speak, to take and pawn and accept the challenge.' (Capablanca)

10...♘xe5 11 ♖xe5

So, Black has sacrificed a pawn...



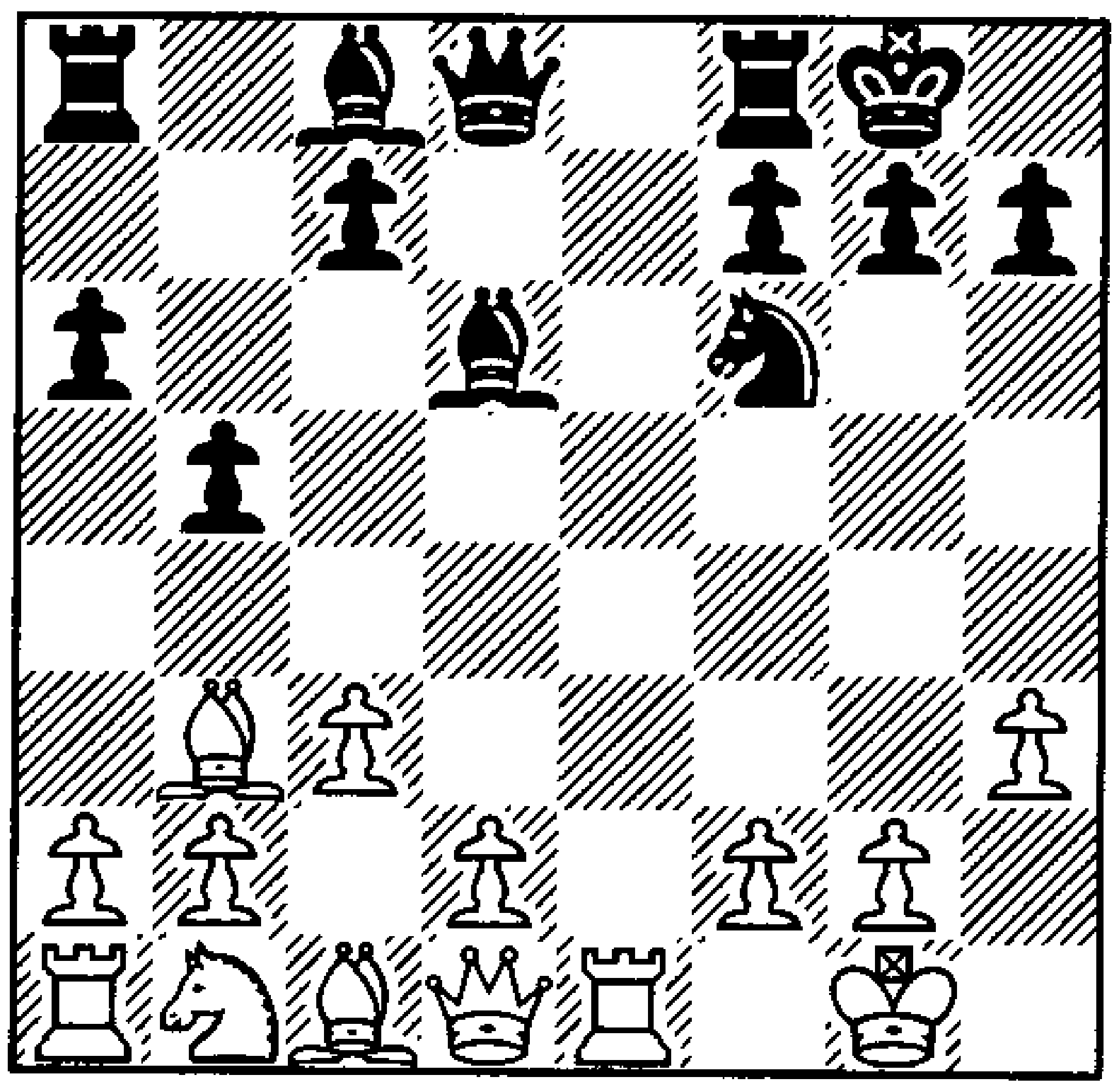
11...♘f6?!

In 1938 Marshall introduced the main line 11...c6!, which was later developed in detail by Soviet players, including Spassky and Geller. And nowadays it is played by Adams, Short, Khalifman, Svidler...

12 ♖e1

Later 12 d4 ♗d6 13 ♖e1 (13 ♖e2 ♘h5!) 13...♘g4 14 h3 ♕h4 15 ♕f3! became generally accepted. Capablanca tries to divert his opponent from his prepared analysis, but things revert to a simple transposition of moves.

12...♗d6 13 h3



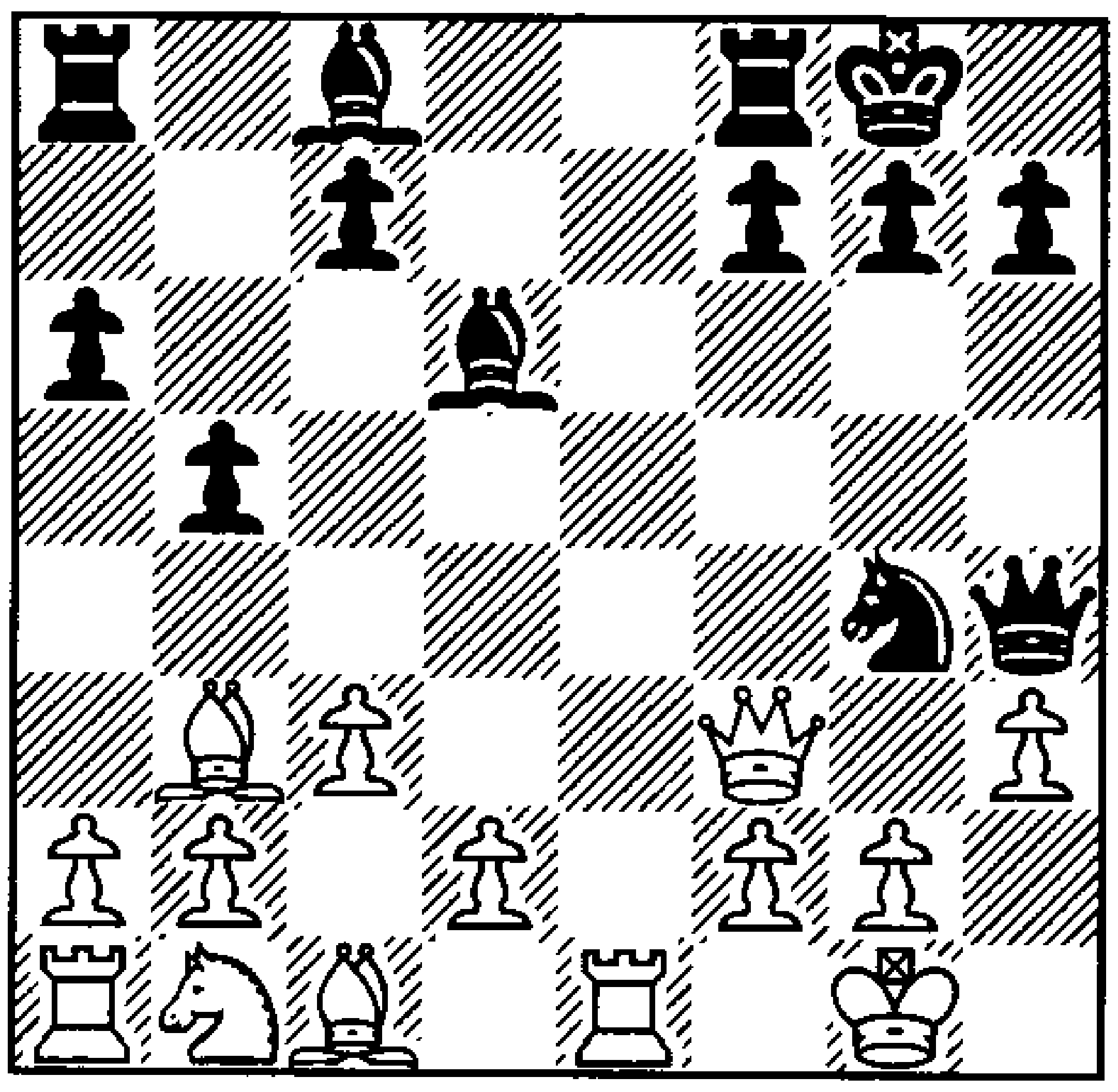
13...♘g4!?

Bold – and fully in Marshall's style. Panov recommended the positional plan with 13...♗b7 14 d4 ♕d7, although a pawn is a pawn.

14 ♕f3!

Both defence, and aggression; 14 hxg4? ♕h4 15 ♕f3 ♗h2+! and 16...♗xg4 with a decisive attack.

14...♕h4



15 d4

Again 15 hxg4? is bad in view of 15...♗h2+! 16 ♔f1 ♗xg4 17 ♕e4 ♗f4! 18 g3 ♕h2 and White has no defence:

1) 19 ♖e3 ♖ae8 20 ♕d5 ♗xg3! 21 ♖xg3 (21 ♕xf7+ ♔h8!) 21...♗e2+ 22 ♔e1 ♗f3+;

2) 19 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 20 ♕d5+ ♔g6 21 ♖e6+ ♗xe6 22 ♕xe6+ ♔h5 23 ♕d5+ ♗g5 24 ♕g2 ♖xf2+! 25 ♕xf2 ♕h1+ 26 ♔e2 ♖e8+ (Tal);

3) 19 gxf4 (my attempt) 19...♗h3+! (but not 19...♖ae8 20 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 21 ♕d5+ ♔g6 22 ♕g5+ ♔f7 23 ♕d5+ ♗e6 24 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 25 f5 ♕h3+ 26 ♔g1 ♕g4+ with a draw) 20 ♔e2 ♖ae8 21 d3 ♗g4+ 22 ♔e3 ♖xe4+ 23 dxe4 ♕h3+ 24 ♔d4 ♖d8+ 25 ♔c5 ♕h6 winning.

15...♘xf2

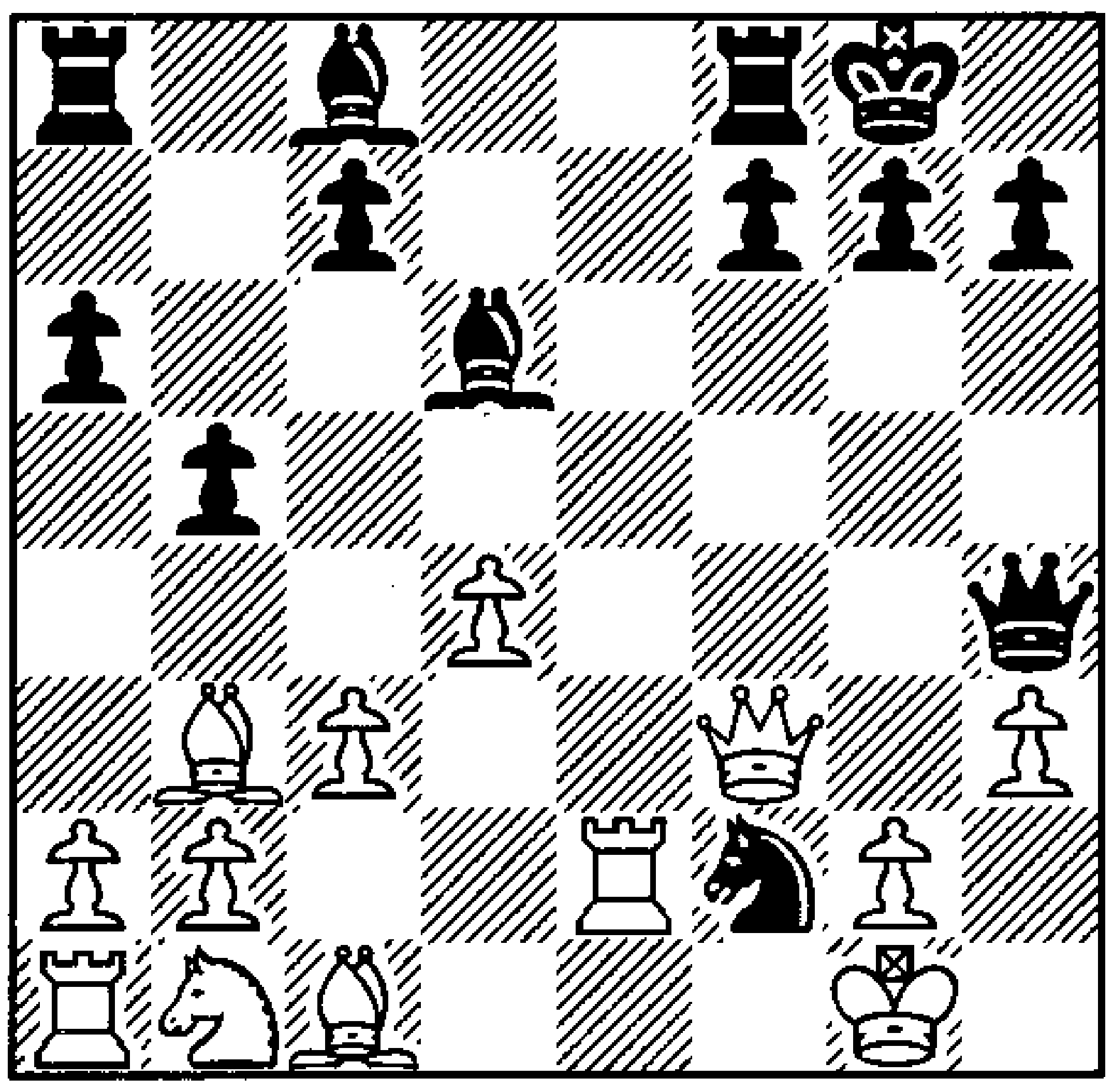
'The trapper trapped. Black, however, had nothing better, and had to go on with the attack to do or die.' (Capablanca) Not reckoning on Shamkovich's idea of 15...h5!? 16 ♗e3 (16 ♘d2 ♗h2+ 17 ♔f1 ♗d6! is equal) 16...♘xe3 17 ♖xe3 ♕f4 18 ♕xf4 ♗xf4 19 ♖e1 ♗f5, when Black's two powerful bishops prevent White from converting his extra pawn.

16 ♖e2

Of course, not 16 ♕xf2? ♗h2+! 17 ♔f1 ♗g3 18 ♕e2 ♗xh3 19 gxh3 ♖ae8 and White is in trouble. However, in the 1950s it transpired that 16 ♗d2! is stronger, for example:

1) 16...♗b7?! (16...♘g4? 17 ♖e8!; 16...♗e6? 17 ♖e3!, but not 17 ♕xf2? ♗g3 18 ♕e3 ♖ae8 19 ♖e2 ♗xh3 20 ♕xe8 ♗e6!) 17 ♕xb7 ♘d3 18 ♖e2! ♖ae8 (or 18...♕g3 19 ♔f1! ♕h2 20 g4! ♕xh3+ 21 ♕g2 ♕h4 22 ♗e3 ♖ae8 23 ♘d2 ♗f4 24 ♘f3 ♕h6 25 ♗c2 and wins) 19 ♕f3 ♖xe2 20 ♕xe2 ♕g3 21 ♕f3! ♕h2+ 22 ♔f1 ♕h1+ 23 ♔e2 ♘xb2 24 ♗e3 winning (Euwe);

2) 16...♗xh3 17 gxh3 ♘xh3+ 18 ♔f1 ♘g5 (Lilienthal; 18...g5 19 ♖e4 ♗f4 20 ♗xf4 ♘xf4 21 ♘d2 ♖ad8 22 ♖xf4! gxf4 23 ♘e4 Aronin) 19 ♗xg5 (19 ♕g2 ♖ae8!) 19...♕xg5 20 ♘a3 c5 21 ♖ad1 with an obvious advantage to White.



16...♗g4?

'The best way to continue the attack.' (Capablanca) Nothing of the sort! Tartakower pointed out the saving move 16...♘g4!, for example:

1) 17 ♖e8 ♘f6! 18 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 19 ♘d2 ♖b8 20 ♘f1 ♗b7 with equality;

2) 17 ♗f4 ♗b7 18 d5 ♘f6 19 ♗xd6 cxd6 20 ♘d2 ♖ae8 is also level;

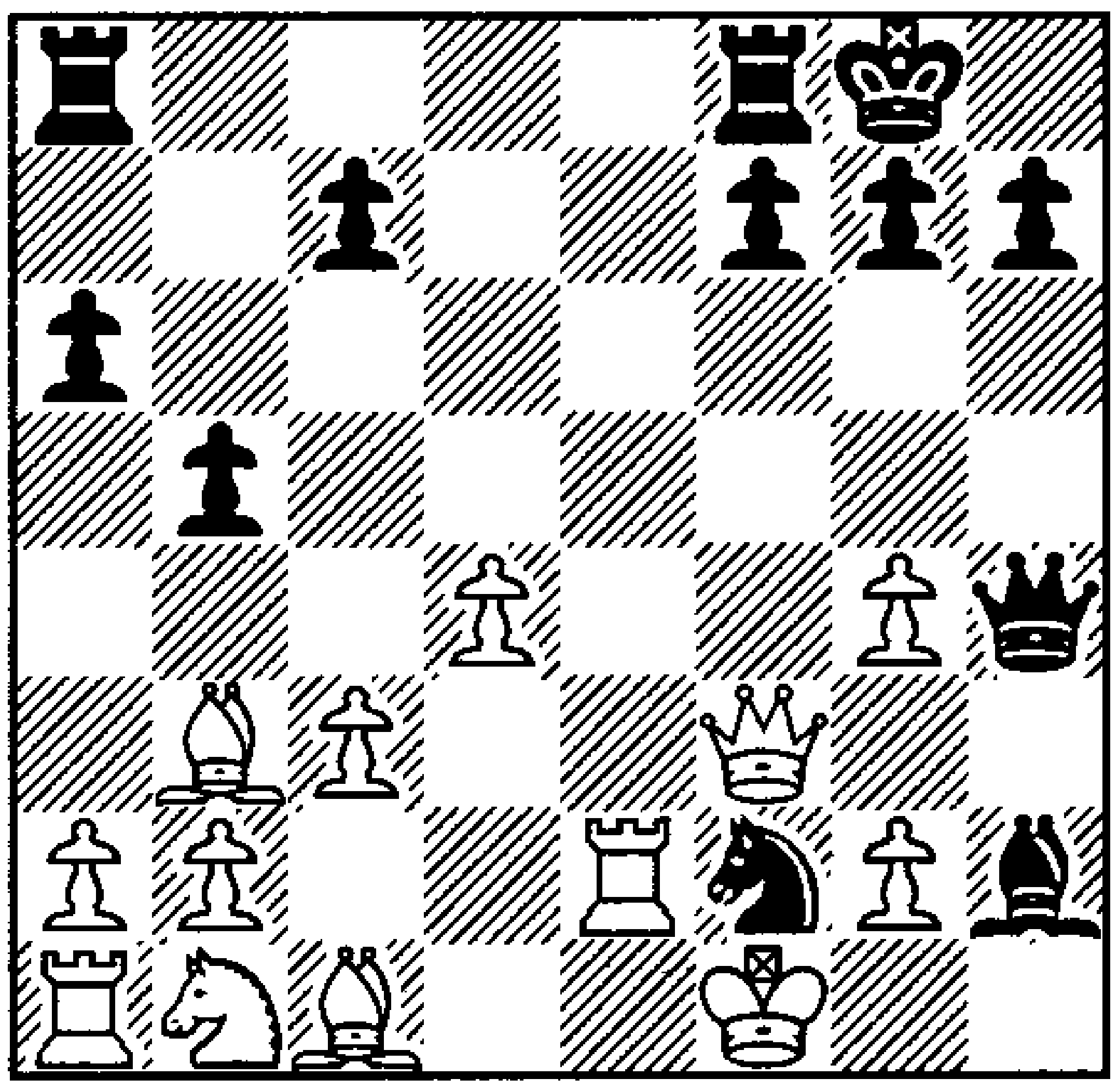
3) 17 ♕xa8 ♕g3 18 hxg4 ♕h2+ 19 ♔f1 ♗g3 20 ♗e3 ♕h1+ 21 ♗g1 ♗h2, and here everyone gives the cooperative variation 22 ♔e1? ♕xg1+ 23 ♔d2 ♗f4+, overlooking 22 ♗xf7+! ♔h8 (or 22...♖xf7+ 23 ♔e1 ♕xg1+ 24 ♔d2 ♖f8 25 ♕d5+ ♔h8 26 ♕f3! ♗d6 27 ♖e1) 23 ♖e6!! ♕xg1+ 24 ♔e2 ♕c1 25 ♘d2 ♕xa1 26 ♖e8 ♖xe8+ 27 ♗xe8 ♗xg4+ 28 ♔d3 ♗f5+ 29 ♔e2 with equality; sharp play also results from 19 ♔f2!? ♗xg4 20 ♕e4 ♗g3+ 21 ♔e3 ♕g1+ 22 ♔d3 ♗xe2+ 23 ♕xe2 ♕xc1 24 ♗d1 ♗e1!? 25 ♕xe1 ♕xb2 26 ♗b3 ♕xa1 27 ♔c2 a5 etc.;

4) 17 g3!? (this would appear to be the best) 17...♕xh3 18 ♕xa8 ♗xg3 19 ♕g2 ♕h4 20 ♘d2 and there is everything to play for.

17 hxg4 (but not 17 ♕xf2? ♗g3 18 ♕f1 ♗xe2 19 ♕xe2 ♖ae8) **17...♗h2+**

Less good was 17...♘xg4?! 18 ♗f4!

18 ♔f1



18...♗g3

'I expected 18...♘h1. White, however, can defend in several ways. The best might be 19 ♗e3.' (Capablanca) And indeed, after 19...♘g3+ 20 ♔e1 ♖ae8 21 ♘d2 ♗g1 22 ♘f1 ♘xe2+ 23 ♔xe2 ♕g5 24 ♖e1 Black is lost.

19 ♖xf2 ♕h1+ 20 ♔e2 ♗xf2?!

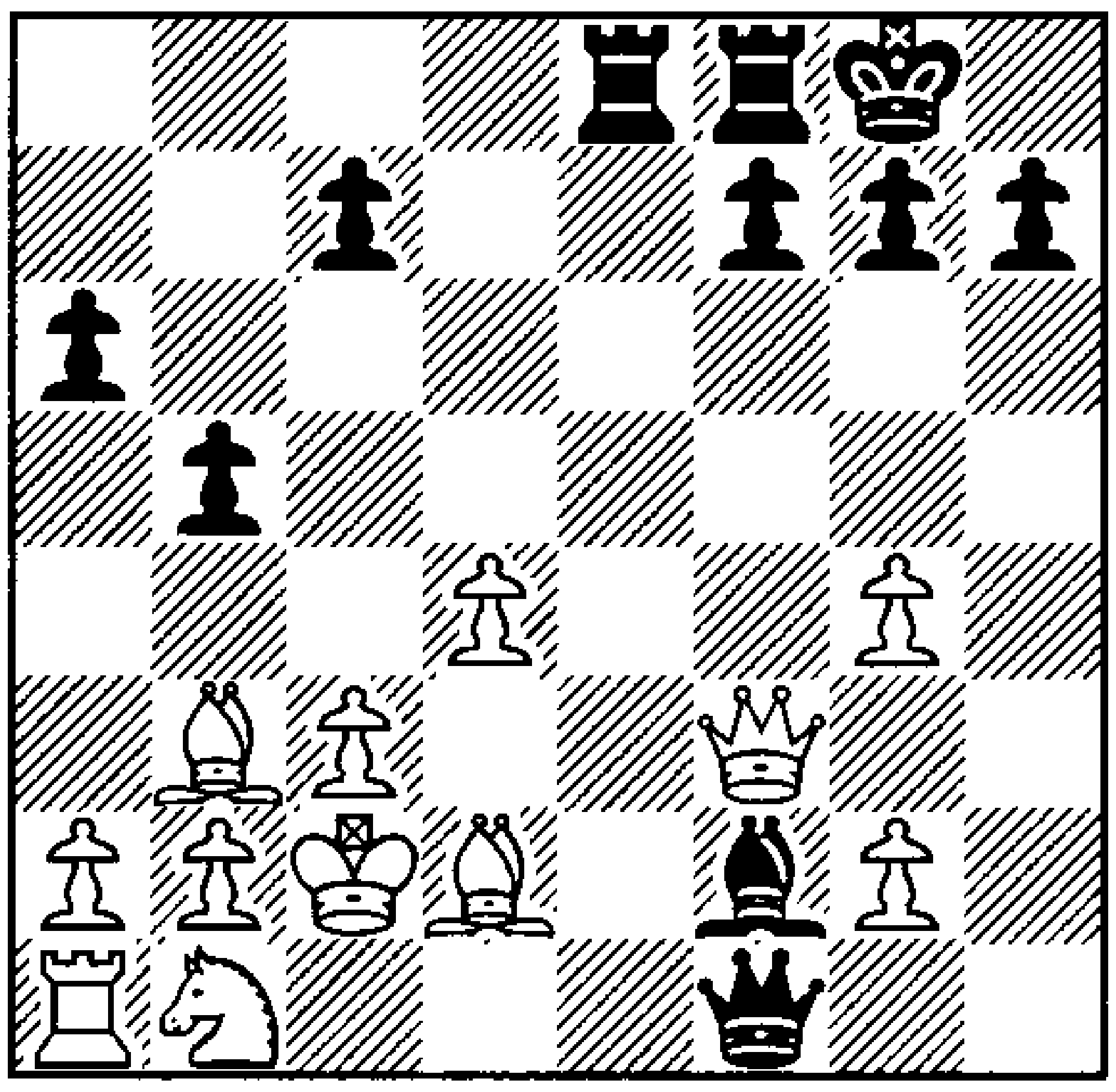
White would have been set greater problems by 20...♕xc1! 21 ♕xg3 (21 ♗xf7?! ♔h8 22 ♖f1 ♕c2+ 23 ♘d2 ♖ae8+! or 21 ♖f1 ♖ae8+ 22 ♔d3 ♖e3+ 23 ♕xe3 ♕xf1+ 24 ♕e2 ♕c1 is not so clear) 21...♕xb2+ 22 ♔d3 ♕xa1 23 ♔c2 ♖ae8! (Panov's suggestion of 23...b4?! 24 g5! is weaker) 24 ♕xc7 ♖e1 25 ♘d2 etc.

21 ♗d2! ♗h4 22 ♕h3!

'Black, in order to avoid the exchange of queens, is now compelled to drive the king to c2, where he is safe.' (Capablanca)

22...♖ae8+ 23 ♔d3 ♕f1+ 24 ♔c2 ♗f2 25 ♕f3!

After this pendulum move Black's activity comes to a standstill.



25...♕g1

Unpinning the bishop. If 25...♖e2, then 26 a4! ♕e1 27 axb5! ♖xd2+ (27...♗e3? 28 ♕xe3!) 28 ♘xd2 ♕xa1 29 ♕xf2 axb5 30 ♘f3 wins.

26 ♗d5 c5 27 dxc5 ♗xc5 28 b4!

The attack is repulsed, and White's material advantage decides the outcome.

28...♗d6 29 a4 a5?! (a despairing chance) **30 axb5 axb4 31 ♖a6! bxc3 32 ♘xc3 ♗b4 33 b6 ♗xc3 34 ♗xc3 h6**

Or 34...♖e3 35 ♕xf7+!

35 b7 ♖e3 36 ♗xf7+! 1-0

In view of inevitable mate, Black resigned. 'This clash, like the San Sebastian game Capablanca-Janowski (*Game No.77*), clearly demonstrates the Cuban player's skill in the defence of even the most complicated and double-edged positions.' (Panov)

In the spring of 1919 Capablanca won a match in Havana against Boris Kostić (the second prize-winner at New York 1918), who before that had drawn all his games with the Cuban, but here the score was 5-0! The winner was to be the first to win eight games, but Kostic fully appreciated the situation and resigned the match...

In the summer Capa again moved to Europe and played in the tournament in Hastings, which from that time began to be held every year (true, in the Christmas holidays), but in that post-war year it did not have many famous names: 1. Capablanca – 10½ out of 11; 2. Kostic – 9½; 3-4. Thomas and Yates – 7 etc.

Over that five-year period the Cuban had reinforced the legend of his invincibility, gaining an impressive score in serious games: +48 -1 =10. In his opinion, in St Petersburg he had already achieved the peak of his chess strength. 'Hereafter I may gain a little from experience,' he wrote in 1919, 'and the style may be changed somewhat accordingly, but whatever I may gain in one way I am sure will show a corresponding loss somewhere else.'

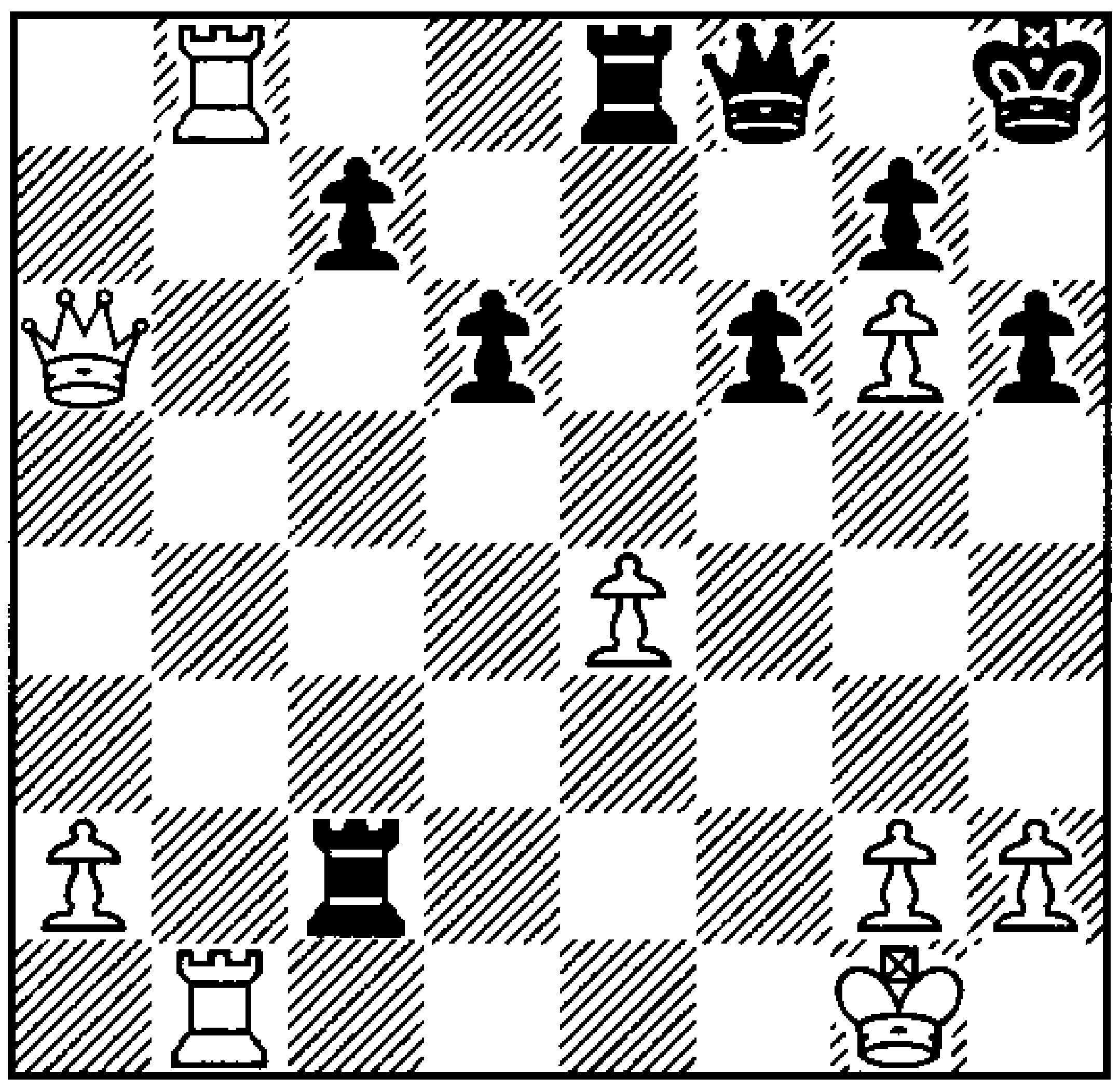
His play seemed almost ideal, and only after a careful study was it possible to see 'spots on the sun' – barely perceptible symptoms of the process that Soviet journalism, which was rich in nicknames, christened 'the degradation of creative directives'.

Typical was the finish to the Hastings game between Capablanca and Sir George Thomas, the leading English player of that time (and, incidentally, very highly respected in the chess world).

Game 87

J.R.Capablanca-G.Thomas

Hastings 1919, 4th round



Here White landed the 'decisive' blow **29 ♕a8?** and... Black resigned because of 29...♖xb8? 30 ♖xb8 with unavoidable mate. Another masterpiece by the Cuban genius? Alas, just the opposite! The unexpected 29...♖xa2!! would have dispelled White's illusions: after 30 ♕b7 (30 ♕xa2 ♖xb8; 30 ♖xe8 ♖xa8! 31 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8) 30...c5 31 ♖xe8 ♕xe8 32 ♕f7 ♖a8 the limit of his dreams is compensation for the pawn.

Meanwhile he missed an easy win: 29 ♕b5! ♖xb8 30 ♕xb8 ♖c1+ (30...♔g8 31 ♕b3+) 31 ♔f2 ♖c2+ 32 ♔e3 ♔g8 33 ♕b3+ d5 34 ♕xc2 or, even more attractive, 29 ♖xe8! ♕xe8 30 ♕a4!! ♖xg2+ (30...♕xa4 31 ♖b8+ and mate; 30...♖c1+ 31 ♔f2) 31 ♔xg2 ♕xg6+ 32 ♔h1.

Curiously, the next day Capablanca managed without any tactical brilliance, creating a textbook example on the theme 'a bishop out of play'.

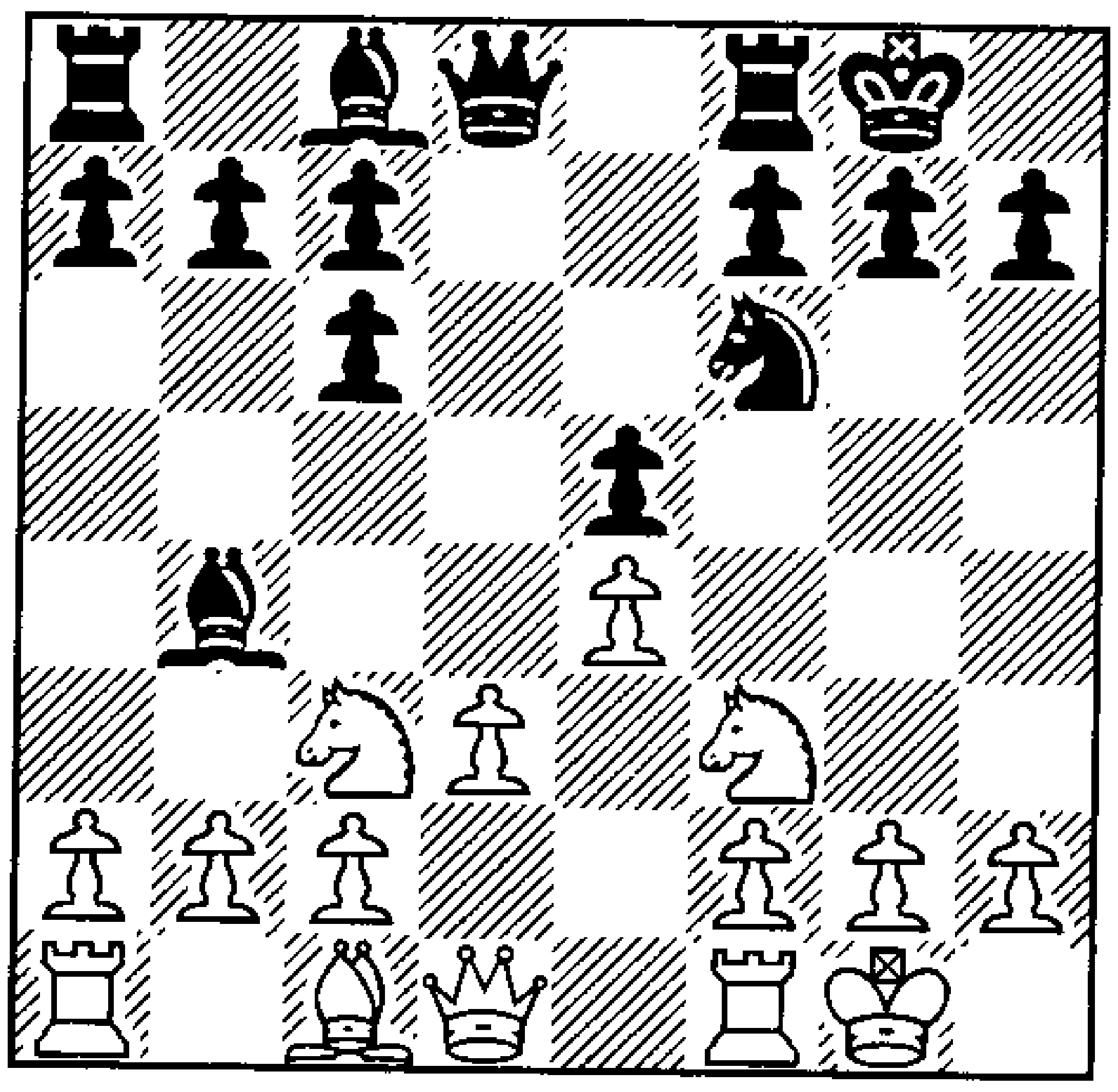
Game 88

W.Winter-J.R.Capablanca

Hastings 1919, 5th round

Four Knights Game C49

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗b5 ♗b4 5 0-0 0-0 6 ♗xc6!? (instead of the usual 6 d3) **6...dxc6** (6...bxc6?! – *Game No.110*) **7 d3**



Nimzowitsch's Variation, which is similar to the Exchange Variation and the later Hort Variation in the Ruy Lopez. 7 ♘xe5 is harmless in view of 7...♖e8 or immediately 7...♗xc3 8 dxc3 ♘xe4.

7...♗d6

A new move! At the time the following games had been seen, where White had held the initiative:

1) 7...♗g4 8 h3 ♗h5 (8...♗xf3!?) 9 ♗g5 (9 ♔h1 ♕e7 10 ♖g1 ♖ad8 11 ♕e2 h6 12 ♘d1 ♗c5 13 g4 ♗g6 14 ♘h4 Paulsen-Göring, Leipzig 1877) 9...♕d6 10 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 11 g4 ♗g6 12 ♔g2 ♖ad8 13 ♕e2 (with the idea of ♘d1-e3) 13...♗xc3 14 bxc3 c5 15 ♘d2! ♕e7 16 ♘c4 b6 17 ♘e3 f6 18 ♖g1 (Nimzowitsch-Leonhardt, San Sebastian 1911);

2) 7...♕d6 8 ♘e2 c5 9 ♘g3 ♗a5 10 ♘h4 g6 11 h3, preparing f2-f4 (Nimzowitsch-Vidmar, San Sebastian 1911);

3) 7...♖e8 8 h3 (8 ♘e2!?) 8...h6 9 ♘e2 ♘h5 10 g4 ♘f6 11 ♘g3 ♘h7 12 ♘f5 ♗xf5 13 gxf5 (Capablanca-Tennenwurtzel, New York 1913), or 8...♗xc3 9 bxc3 ♕d6 10 ♘h4 g6 11 f4 (Capablanca-Kupchik, New York 1913);

4) 7...♕e7 8 ♕e2 (8 ♘e2!? this manoeuvre is also good after the modern 7...♘d7) 8...♖e8 9 h3 g6 10 ♕e3 ♘h5 11 ♘e2 ♗c5 12 ♕h6 f6 13 g4 ♘g7 14 ♔g2 ♕f7 15 ♘h2 ♗f8 16 ♕e3 (Capablanca-Jaffe, New York 1913).

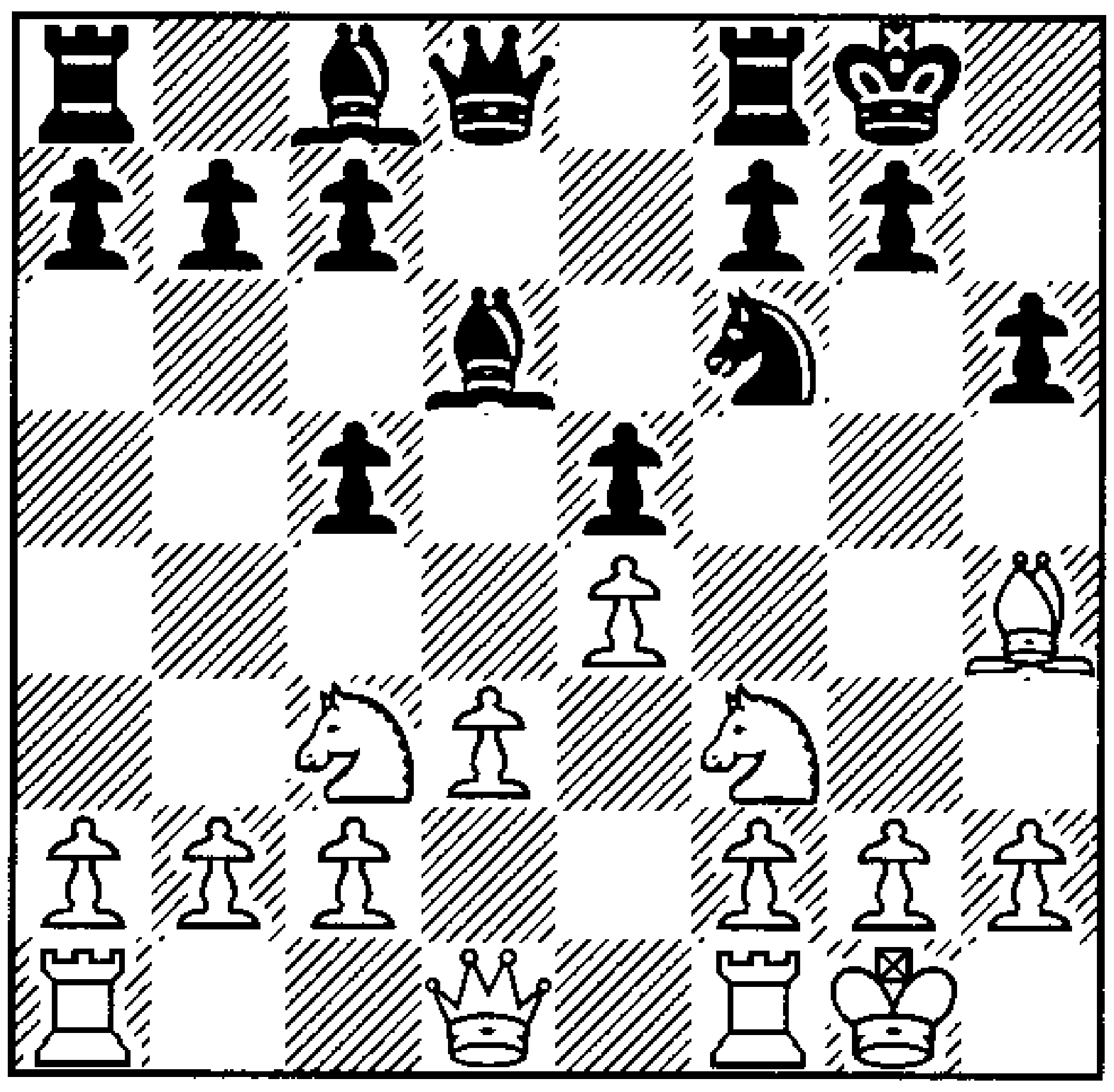
Incidentally, the idea of spoiling the pawns by ♗xc6 has proved very long-lived, and not only in the Ruy Lopez. In the Sicilian with 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5, after 3...g6, and 3...e6, and 3...d6 nowadays 4 ♗xc6 is often played, giving the opponent the two bishops, but trying to exploit the superior pawn structure. It is the same in the English Opening: 1 c4 e5 (1...e6) 2 ♘c3 ♗b4 or 2...♘f6 3 g3 ♗b4, aiming to capture soon on c3.

8 ♗g5?!

The start of a series of amateur moves. Winter clearly has no feeling for the subtleties of this variation, as otherwise he would have preferred 8 h3, 8 ♘e2 or even the unusual 8 ♔h1 h6 9 ♘g1 (Nimzowitsch-Behting, correspondence 1913).

8...h6 9 ♗h4 c5

Inhibiting d3-d4 and ... a slight provocation.



10 ♘d5?

'White falls into the trap. Only lack of experience can account for this move.' (Capablanca) 10 ♘d2 followed by ♘c4-e3 was in the spirit of the position.

10...g5! 11 ♘xf6+

In the event of 11 ♘xg5? ♘xd5! White would have lost a piece: 12 ♘f3 ♘f6 (12...♗e7!?) 13 ♘d2 ♗e7. Also hopeless was 11 ♗g3 ♘xd5 12 exd5 ♗g4 13 h3 ♗xf3 14 ♕xf3 f5 (then ...♕f6, ...♔h7, ...♖f7, ...♖g8 and ...g5-g4 with an attack) or 13...♗h5!? 14 ♗h2 f5.

11...♕xf6 12 ♗g3 ♗g4 13 h3 ♗xf3 14 ♕xf3 ♕xf3 15 gxf3 f6!

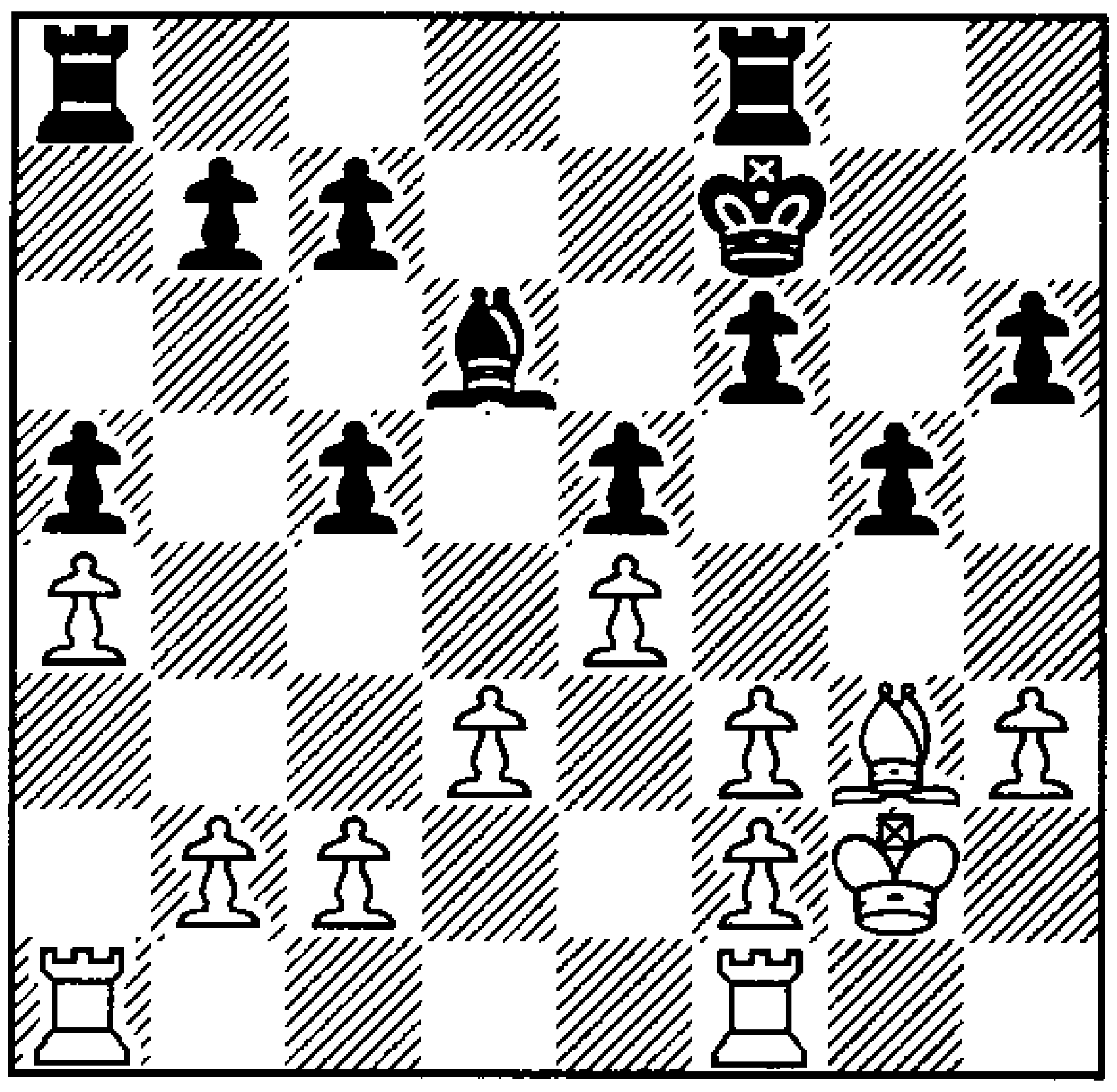
'A simple examination will show that White is minus a bishop for all practical purposes. Black now devotes all his energy to the queenside, and having practically a bishop more the result cannot be in doubt.' (Capablanca) Whether this is so, we shall see...

16 ♔g2

After 16 c3 ♖ad8 17 ♖fd1 ♖d7 (18 ♖d2 ♖fd8) White would have been unable to play d3-d4 without losing material, but 18 ♔f1!? ♔f7 19 ♔e2 would have retained chances of a successful defence. However, the difference in the two opponents' standard of play was so great that Winter's choice is of no great importance.

16...a5 (threatening 17...a4) **17 a4 ♔f7**

In my opinion. the key moment of the game.



18 ♖h1?!

The opening of the h-file does not help White: his bishop remains unemployed. Much more interesting was the attempt, ignored by all the commentators, to create a fortress – 18 c4!, for example: 18...c6 19 ♖fc1 ♖fb8 20 b3 b5 21 ♖c3! ♖b6 22 ♔f1 bxc4 23 dxc4 ♖ab8 24 ♖a3! (but not 24 ♖b1? ♖b4 with the threat of ...♖xa4) and ♔e2-d2-c2.

It would appear that the version stemming from Capablanca about 'how simple it is to win such a game' is another beautiful legend...

18...♔e6 (preparatory centralisation) **19 h4 ♖fb8 20 hxg5 hxg5 21 b3**

If 21 c4!? Black would also have replied 21...c6 followed by ...b7-b5.

21...c6! (only not 21...b5? 22 axb5 ♖xb5 23 ♖a4 ♖b4 24 ♖ha1 with counterplay) **22 ♖a2 b5 23 ♖ha1 c4!**

The decisive breakthrough. Now it all is indeed simple: if 24 dxc4 bxc4 25 bxc4, then 25...♖b4!, followed by ...♖ab8, ...♖xc4 etc.

24 axb5 cxb3 25 cxb3 (25 ♖xa5? ♖xa5 26 ♖xa5 b2) **25...♖xb5 26 ♖a4 ♖xb3 27 d4 ♖b5! 28 ♖c4** (28 dxe5 fxe5!) **28...♖b4 29 ♖xc6** (29 ♖xb4 ♗xb4 30 dxe5 fxe5 31 ♖c1 c5 also wins) **29...♖xd4 0-1**

The triumph of the play aimed at isolating the bishop. In view of 30 ♖c2 a4 31 ♖ca2 a3 32 ♔f1 ♖b8 33 ♔e2 ♖b2+ 34 ♖xb2 axb2 35

♖b1 ♗a3 36 ♔e3 ♖c4 37 ♔d2 ♖c1 White resigned.

I repeat, Capablanca won his games mainly because he thought in general categories that were unfamiliar to the majority of his opponents. He intuitively grasped and devised plans for creating weaknesses in the opponent's position – this was the next step in the development of the Steinitz School. This strategy gave such excellent results, that Capa became lazy about making concrete calculations, doing so only in cases of extreme necessity, as in the above duel with Marshall, and sometimes miscalculating, as in the game with Thomas.

Coronation in his Native Land

Early in 1920 Lasker and Capablanca met in The Hague and signed an agreement about a match for the world championship. The champion wanted to play in Holland and the USA, but due to financial problems this idea failed. By the summer Lasker felt that he had been left to the mercy of fate and he even renounced his title in favour of Capablanca! I think that this was some kind of game: the chess world could not accept such a gift from the long-standing and undisputed champion... The situation was saved by the challenger's Havana admirers, who invested a record sum of $20,000 in the match.

Financially ruined by the War, Lasker did not resist this suggestion, although earlier he had 'firmly decided not to lower the dignity of the champion and not to travel to his opponent's country, to sub-tropical Havana.' But the chess public had long been demanding a match for the crown, and in the spring of 1921 this match at last took place. They played with a control of 30 moves in two hours, for the first time to the best of 24 games (later Botvinnik liked this rule and it became a standard one during the second half of the 20th century).

Also for the first time, at the suggestion of the champion, the match agreement included an item that the games were the personal property of the players, who had exclusive rights to their publication. However, nothing came of this: one of the American journalists distributed the game scores right round the world...

Of course, playing in hot and sultry Havana was very difficult for the 52-year-old Lasker. This is not the sort of age when you can endure such trials. Yes, at the same age Steinitz defeated Chigorin in Havana, but Lasker was playing a Cuban, not a European! In addition, the champion was badly prepared. He himself wrote: 'I wasn't able to do any worthwhile training. The last few days before the match I used for acclimatisation, hoping to warm up during the actual play, which I had often succeeded in doing previously, especially in St Petersburg.'

By contrast, the 32-year-old Capablanca, who had been gathering strength far away from the War, was clearly on the rise. Nevertheless, Lasker did not intend to lay down his arms and the match, especially initially, took a very tough and tenacious course. The initial four games ended in draws, and only in the first did one of the sides have any appreciable problems: the champion obtained a good position with Black, but he made a mistake and had to find virtually the only moves to save himself.

The first decisive game was the fifth, in which both players displayed brilliant resourcefulness in an unusual position.

Game 89
J.R.Capablanca-Em.Lasker
World Championship Match,
Havana 1921, 5th game
Queen's Gambit D63

1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 c4 e6 4 ♗g5 ♘bd7 (4...c5?! – *Game No. 61*) **5 e3 ♗e7 6 ♘c3 0-0 7 ♖c1 b6**

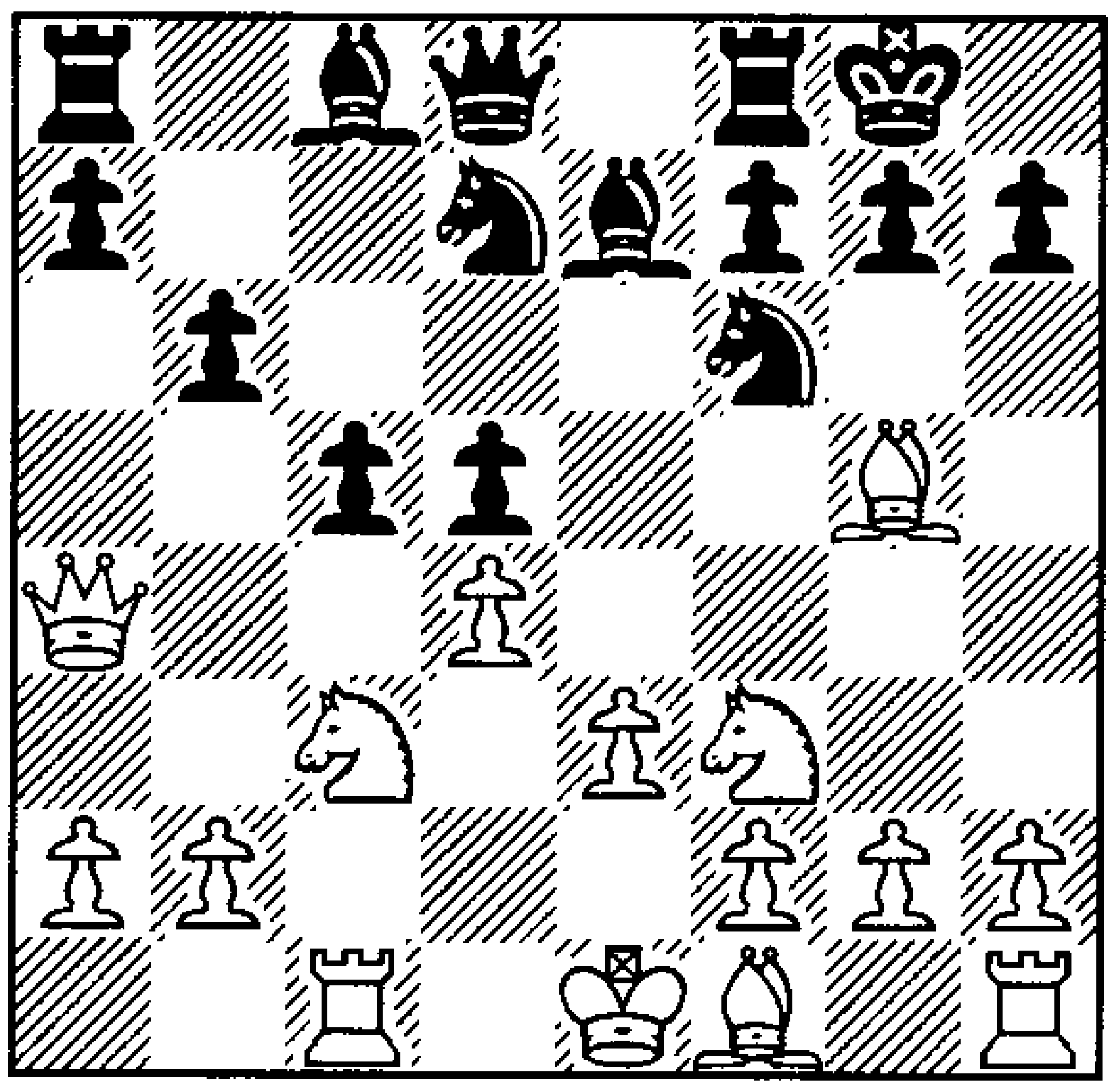
7...c6! or 7...a6 is objectively better.

8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♕a4

The first game went 9 ♗b5 (Capablanca's patent; Pillsbury played 9 ♗d3!? – *Game No.38*) 9...♗b7 10 ♕a4?! (for some reason deviating from the successful 10 0-0 a6 11 ♗a4 ♖c8 12 ♕e2 c5 13 dxc5! Capablanca-Teichmann, Berlin 1913) 10...a6! 11 ♗xd7 (11 ♗c6? b5) 11...♘xd7 with an equal game.

9...c5!?

'A bold, risky move, involving a pawn sacrifice.' (Panov) If 9...♗b7 Lasker did not like 10 ♗a6! (*Game No.79*).



10 ♕c6 ♖b8 11 ♘xd5 ♗b7

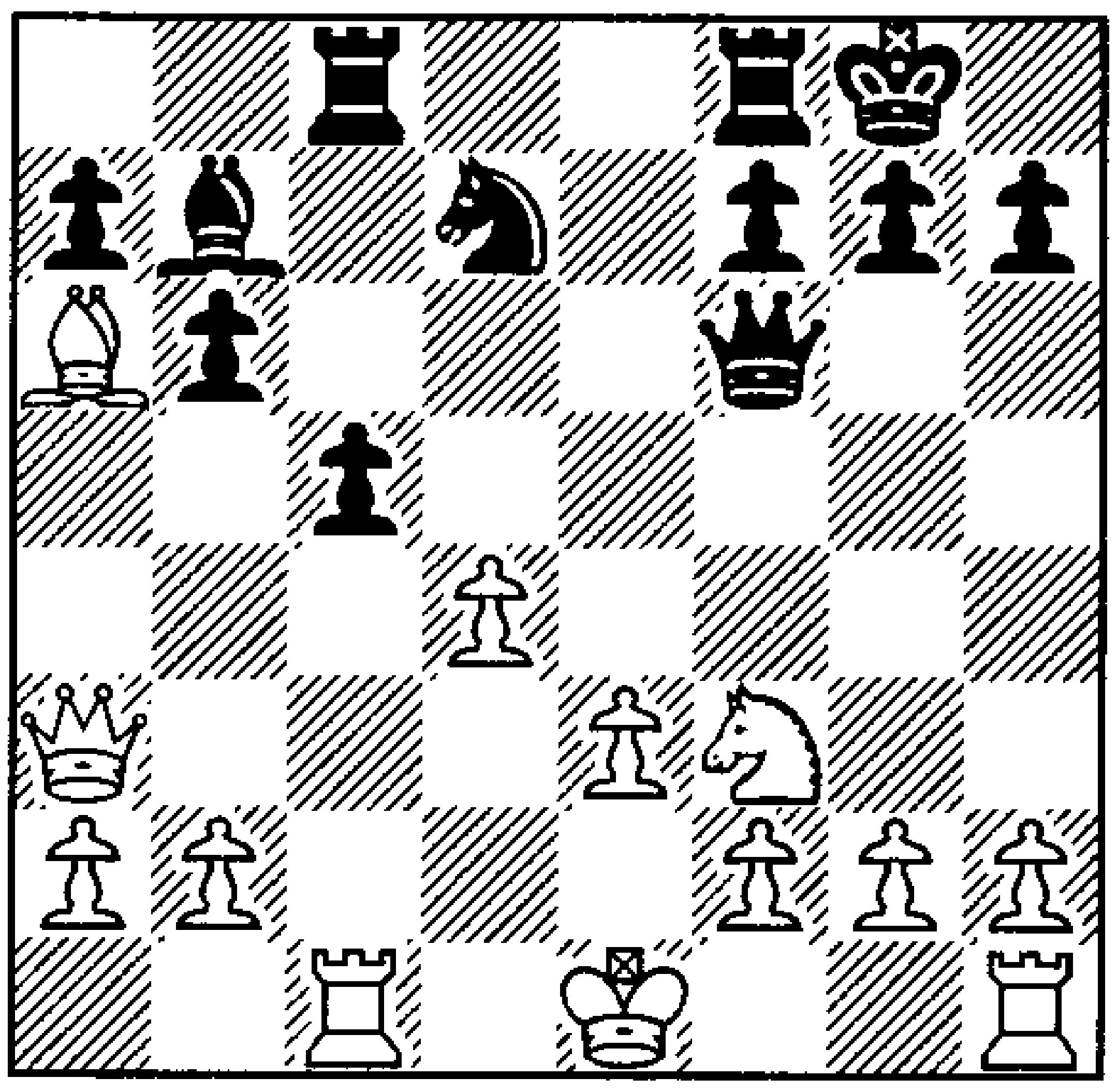
11...♘xd5!? comes into consideration: 12 ♕xd5 ♗b7 13 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 14 ♕g5 (14 ♕c4 ♗xf3 15 gxf3 ♖fd8!?) 14...♕xg5 15 ♘xg5 cxd4 (Capablanca suggested 15...h6 16 ♘f3 ♗xf3 17 gxf3 cxd4 18 ♖c7 ♖fd8) 16 ♖d1!? (Euwe; 16 exd4 ♘f6! etc.) 16...♘f6 17 ♖xd4 ♖bc8 with counterplay, most probably sufficient for a draw. Lasker chose a more complicated way.

12 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 13 ♕a4 ♖bc8?

Too slow. As Duras pointed out, correct was 13...♗xf3! 14 gxf3 cxd4 15 ♕xd4 ♘e5 16 ♗e2 ♖bd8 17 ♕f4 (17 ♕c3 ♖d5) 17...♖d6 with the initiative: 18 0-0?! ♖d2! Even if Black did not have 100% compensation for the pawn, this was definitely the best chance.

14 ♕a3! ♕e6 15 ♗xf6! ♕xf6 16 ♗a6!

With a series of accurate and strong moves Capa has gained an obvious advantage. Here most of his opponents would not have lasted long, but Lasker, though pinned to the wall, only now begins to demonstrate his true strength.



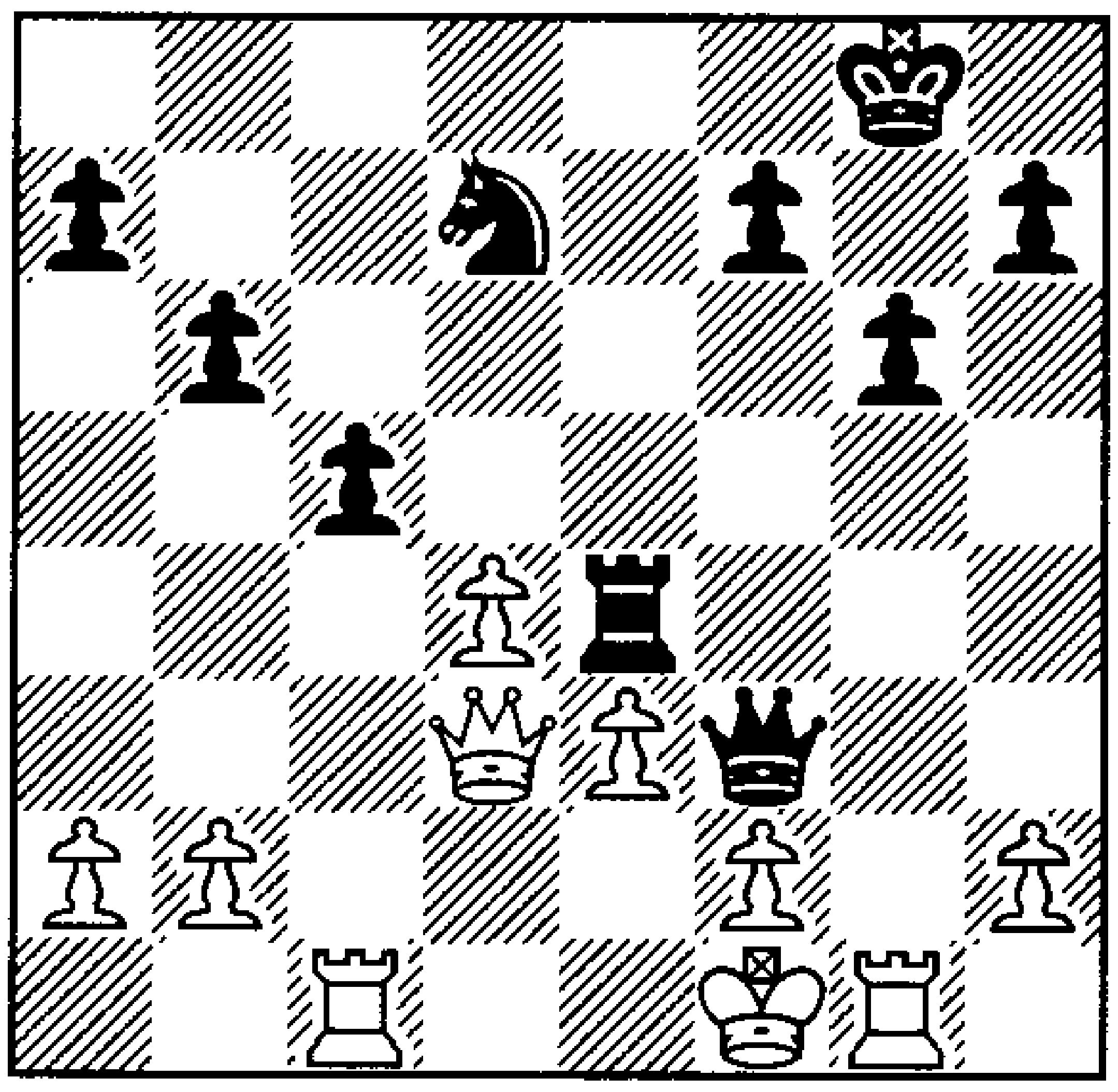
16...♗xf3!

This exchange sacrifice is effectively the only chance: bad are both 16...♗xa6 17 ♕xa6 and 16...cxd4 17 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 18 0-0 ♗xa6 19 ♕xa6 ♖c2 20 ♕a4! ♖c7 21 ♘xd4.

17 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 18 gxf3 ♕xf3 19 ♖g1 ♖e8! (bad is 19...♕h3? 20 ♕xa7 ♕xh2 21 ♕xd7 ♕xg1+ 22 ♔e2! winning) **20 ♕d3**

But not 20 ♕xa7? ♖xe3+.

20...g6 21 ♔f1 ♖e4!



Lasker's tactical resourcefulness is impressive: by giving up the exchange, he has gained definite counterplay instead of a hopeless position. But Capablanca also plays well, accurately parrying the threats and retaining his extra material.

22 ♕d1

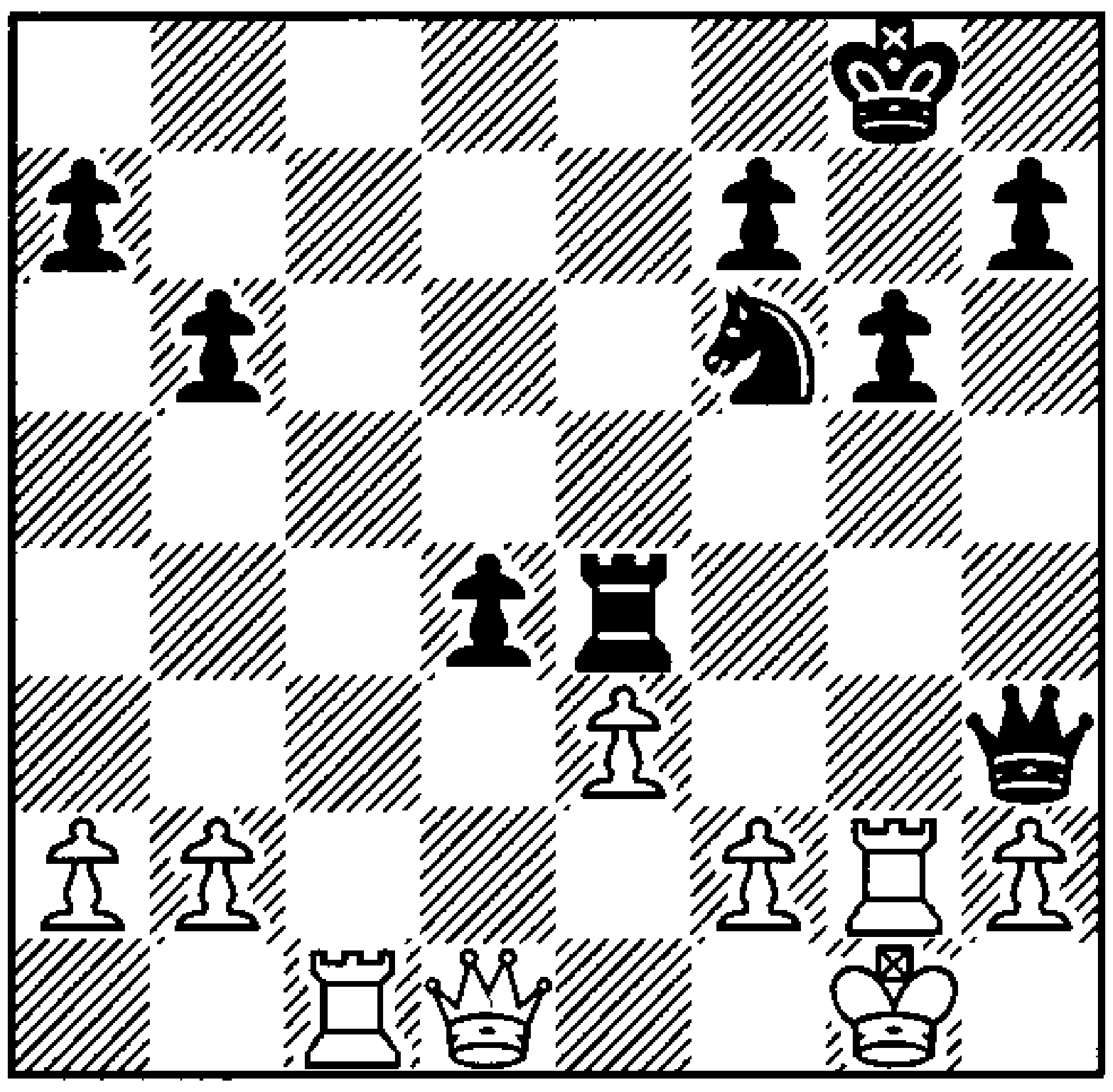
If 22 dxc5 ♘xc5 23 ♕d5 there can follow 23...♕h3+ 24 ♖g2 ♖g4 25 ♔g1 ♘e4 26 ♖xg4 ♕xg4+ 27 ♔f1 ♕h3+ (but not 27...♕f3? 28 ♖c8+ ♔g7 29 ♕e5+ ♔h6 30 ♕f4+) 28 ♔e1 ♕g4 with compensation for the material deficit.

22...♕h3+ 23 ♖g2 ♘f6

With the threat of ...♖g4. Less good is 23...cxd4?! 24 ♖c4!

24 ♔g1! cxd4

If 24...♖g4?! there is 25 ♖g3! (less clear is 25 ♕f1 cxd4 26 exd4 ♕h4, but not 26...♖xd4?? 27 ♖xg6+! and ♕xh3) 25...♖xg3+ 26 hxg3 ♘g4 27 ♕f3 winning. But now something out of the ordinary is demanded of White.



25 ♖c4!

'Wonderful!' (Lasker) And this is indeed an excellent defensive move, forcing the exchange of the menacing black rook. After 25 exd4? ♘d5! 26 ♖g3 ♕e6 Black would have had serious compensation for the exchange: for the moment White's rooks are out of play, his king is exposed, he has a mass of weaknesses, and ...h7-h5-h4 is imminent.

25...dxe3 (bad is 25...♖g4?! 26 ♖c8+ ♔g7 27 ♖xg4 ♘xg4 28 ♕xd4+) **26 ♖xe4 ♘xe4**

Of course, not 26...exf2+? 27 ♖xf2 ♘xe4 28 ♕d8+ ♔g7 29 ♕d4+.

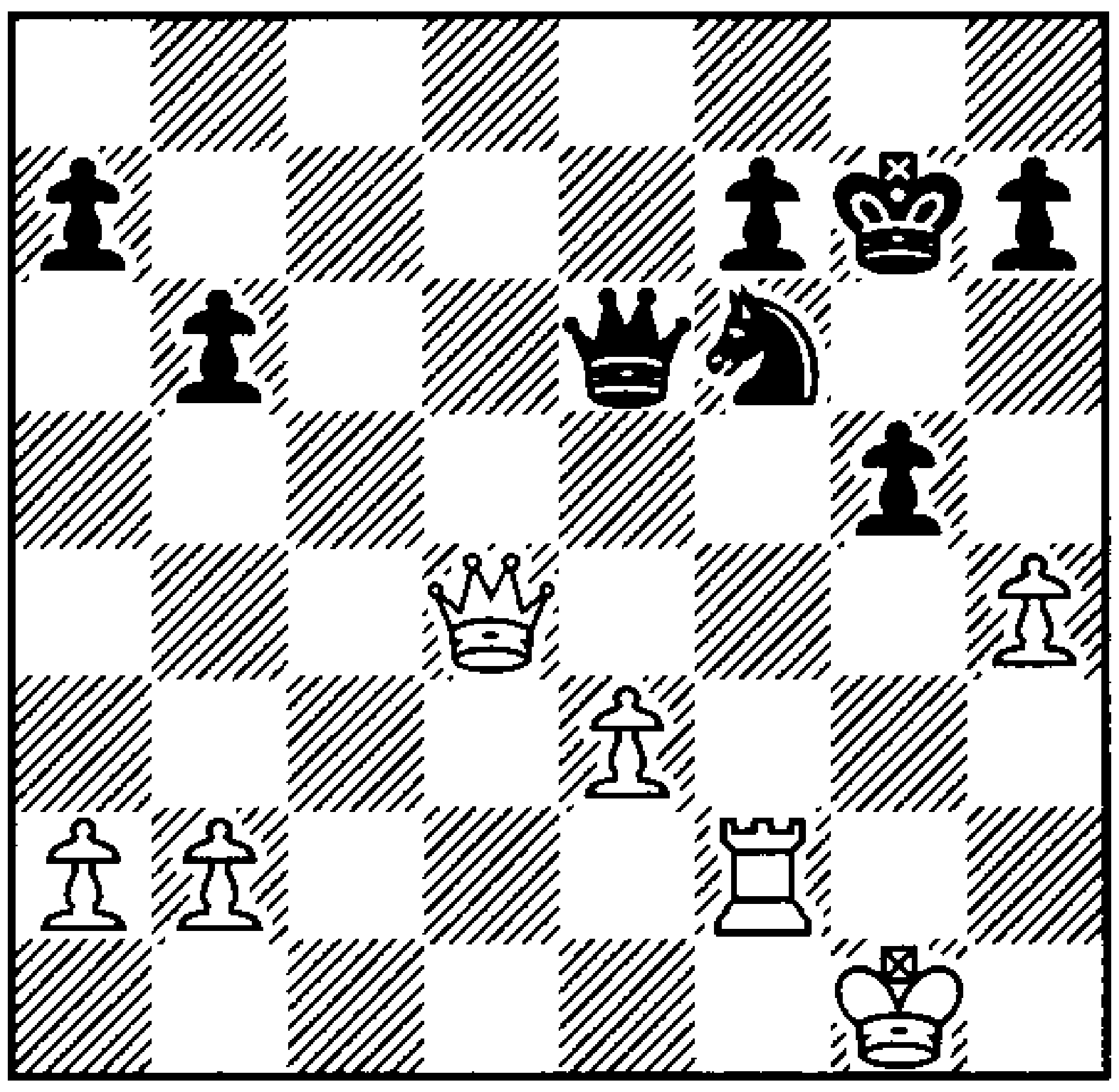
27 ♕d8+ ♔g7 28 ♕d4+ ♘f6 29 fxe3!

After 29 ♕xe3 ♕f5 White's advantage would have been less.

29...♕e6 30 ♖f2 g5

To escape from the pin by ...♔g6.

31 h4



31...gxh4

It is usual to attach a question mark to this move. '31...♔g6 was better. Then if 32 hxg5 ♘e4 33 ♕d3 ♕g4+ 34 ♖g2 ♕h4 35 ♕b1 ♔g7 the pawn at g5 falls and Black has a good position.' (Lasker) At first sight here it is indeed impossible to convert the exchange advantage: the white king is exposed, and Black's queen and knight dominate.

And yet White has a way to gain an advantage: 36 ♕d1! (this is stronger than 36 ♕f1 ♘xg5 37 ♕f4 ♕e1+ 38 ♔h2 h6 39 ♖f2) 36...♔g6 37 ♕f3! (threatening ♕f4) 37...♘xg5 38 ♕g3 with good winning chances. So that 31...♔g6 was by no means better than the move in the game.

32 ♕xh4 ♘g4 33 ♕g5+ ♔f8 34 ♖f5

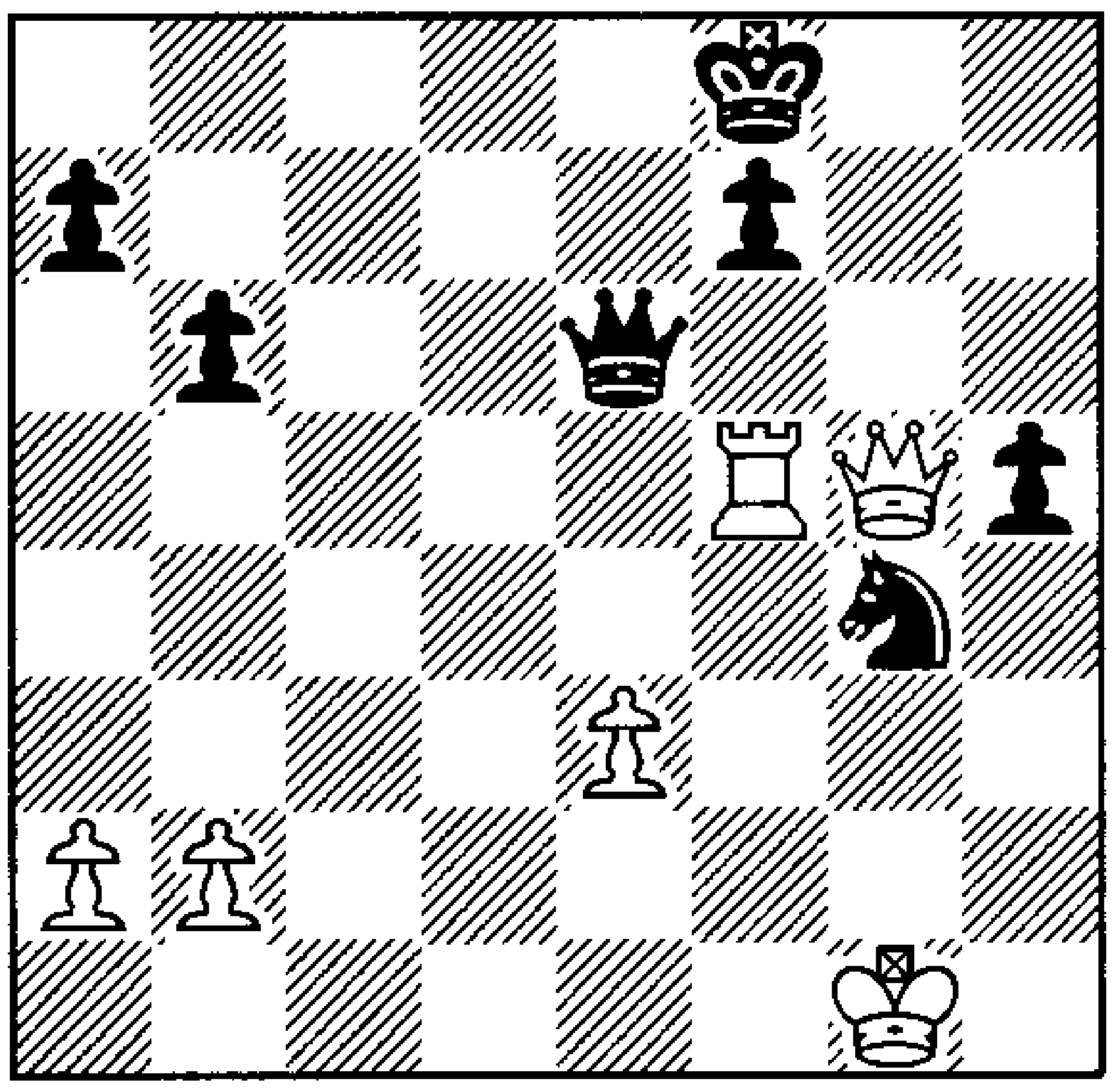
'34 ♖d2! was very strong. 34...f6 must be played and Black's king becomes exposed to attack.' (Lasker) 'If 34...f6, then 35 ♕f4, while if 34...♘f6 there follows 35 e4.' (Panov) Excuse me, but this blunders a pawn (35...♕xe4!) – correct is 35 ♕f4 with an advantage that is probably sufficient to win, although Black has some saving chances.

34...h5!

Making use of the slight respite, Black unexpectedly creates counterplay. 'Not 34...♕xe3+ 35 ♕xe3 ♘xe3 36 ♖f2! and 37 ♖e2 and White wins.' (Lasker)

35 ♕d8+ ♔g7 36 ♕g5+ ♔f8 37 ♕d8+

♔g7 38 ♕g5+ ♔f8



39 b3?!

After checking to gain time on the clock, Capa makes a move 'by eye', a solid one which, though not noticed by anyone, is not the most accurate. Stronger was 39 ♕xh5! ♕xe3+ 40 ♔g2 ♕d2+ 41 ♔g3 ♘h6 42 ♖d5 ♕e1+ 43 ♔g2 ♕e4+ 44 ♔f2, and White should win: it is hardly possible for Black to exploit the open position of his king (it can cross to the queenside).

In the match with Lasker, and also earlier, Capablanca got away with this customary unwillingness to make a detailed calculation of 'dangerous' variations, but later it was to let him down in his match with Alekhine.

39...♕d6!

A brilliant reply: White is tied down, and he is forced to bring back his queen.

40 ♕f4! ♕d1+ 41 ♕f1 ♕d7 42 ♖xh5

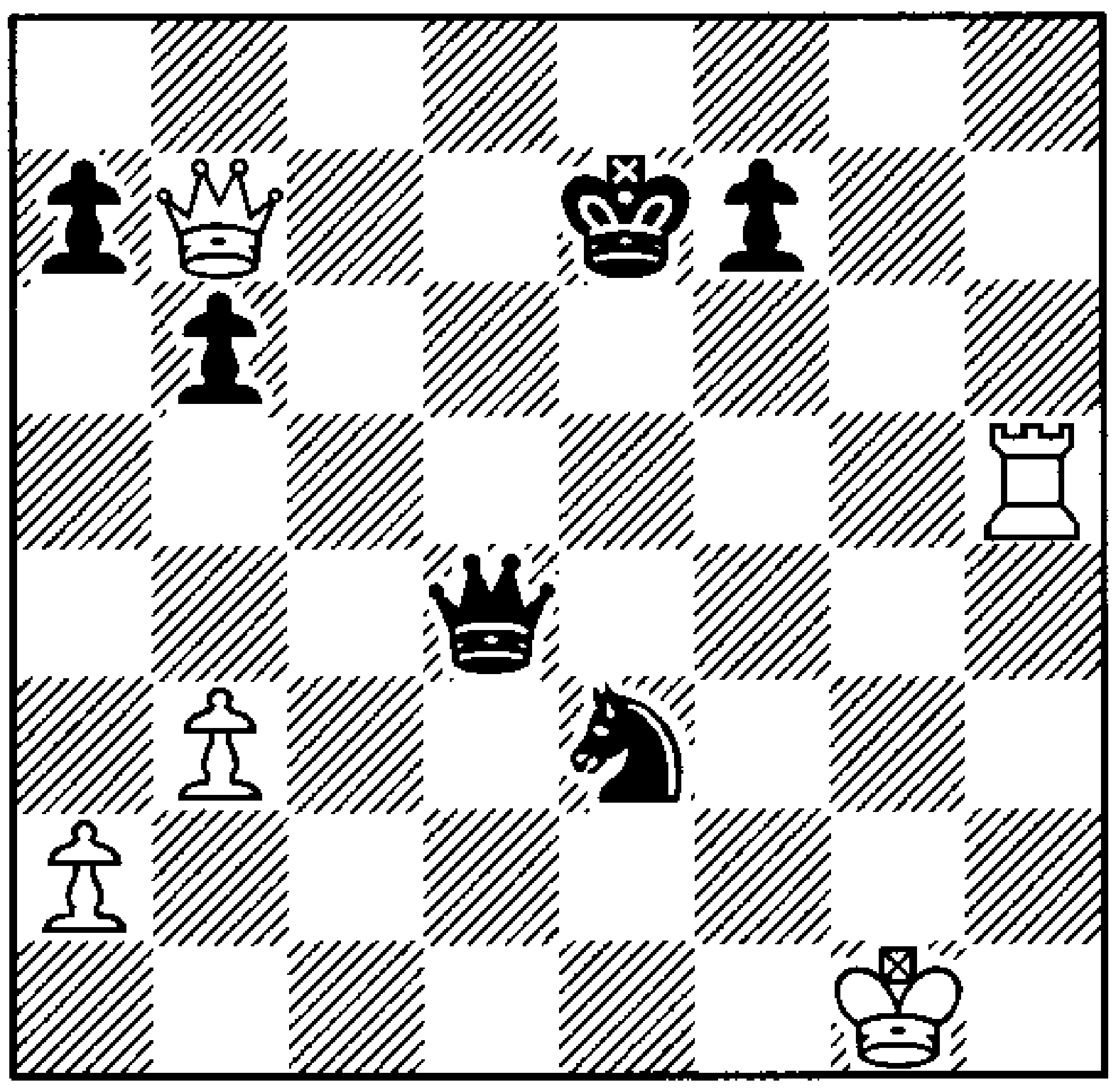
Perhaps 42 ♕f3!? was better, but Capa probably thought that in any case his position was won. As a result, although he refuted the exchange sacrifice, he threw away his advantage and won only thanks to a blunder by his opponent. Such slight inaccuracies harboured the germ, as yet hardly visible, of the future defeat of the third world champion...

42...♘xe3 43 ♕f3 ♕d4!

Amazing resourcefulness. A clear winning plan for White is no longer evident (at least, I have not found a direct win), and some extraordinary measures are required.

44 ♕a8+?! (objectively it is wrong to move the queen away, but it is a chance!) **44...♔e7 45 ♕b7+**

Of course, not 45 ♕xa7+? ♔e6.



45...♔f8??

A great pity: the tired world champion blunders his knight. 'A terrible mistake. I had a quarter of an hour for thinking, but I was completely incapable of doing so. By 45...♔e6 (or 45...♔f6) Black would have avoided the exchange of queens.' (Lasker) And it would indeed be interesting to know how White could have won after 46 ♕c6+ ♔e7 47 ♕f3.

I also like 45...♔d6!? For example: 46 ♕f3! ♘d5+! (inferior is 46...f5?! 47 ♖h6+ ♔e5 48 ♕g3+ f4 49 ♕g7+ ♔e4 50 ♖e6+ ♔d3 51 ♕xd4+ ♔xd4 52 ♔f2) 47 ♔h2 f6, again with real drawing chances.

46 ♕b8+ 1-0

(46...♔e7 47 ♕e5+). The challenger took the lead: 3-2.

The next four games took a quiet course, in which Capablanca did not have any advantage. In the sixth game after lengthy manoeuvres Lasker even gained the better of a double-rook endgame, but suddenly he lost a pawn (again a blunder!) and was forced urgently to make a draw. The seventh and eighth games were short draws, and in the ninth the champion gained some advantage this time with Black, but threw it away with one move...

Lasker's problem was not the blunders,

but the fact that he was quite unable to set the Cuban any real problems. He was evidently affected by the uncustomary Havana climate, and therefore the course of the match did not reflect the true relative strengths of the two players (remember Lasker's subsequent tournament successes). But we must not belittle Capablanca's achievement – he could probably have played more strongly, if it had been required. As we shall see, in Buenos Aires 1927, when he was pressed, he began playing quite differently...

But for the moment the practical challenger was in no hurry to 'strike while the iron was hot'. And the champion too patiently made draws, in order to play himself in – and then to see whether it might be possible somewhere to catch his languid opponent.

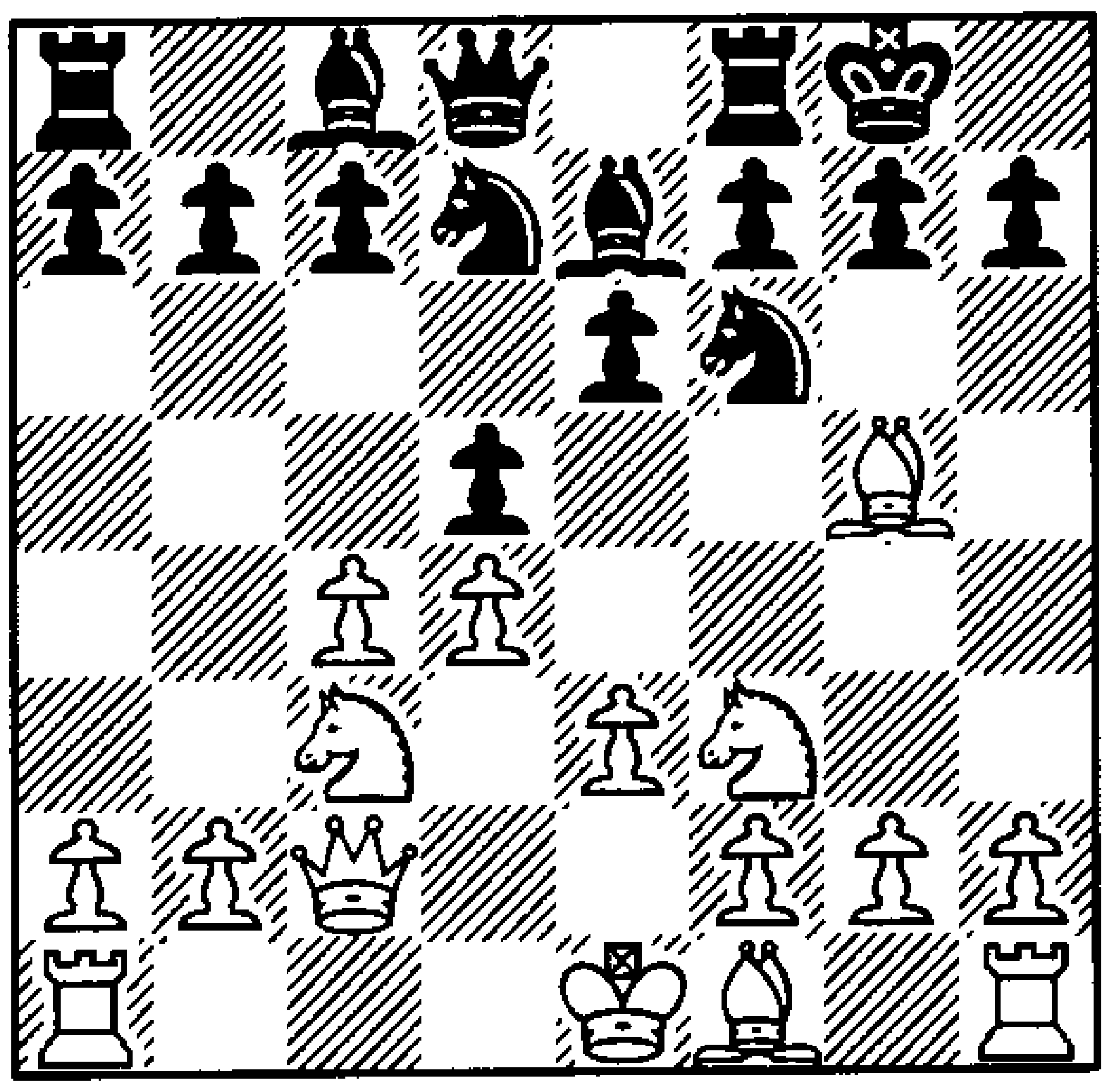
In all probability it was the 10th game that proved the decisive one of the match.

Game 90

Em.Lasker-J.R.Capablanca

World Championship Match,
Havana 1921, 10th game
Queen's Gambit D61

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 e3 0-0 6 ♘f3 ♘bd7 7 ♕c2 (the Rubinstein Attack)

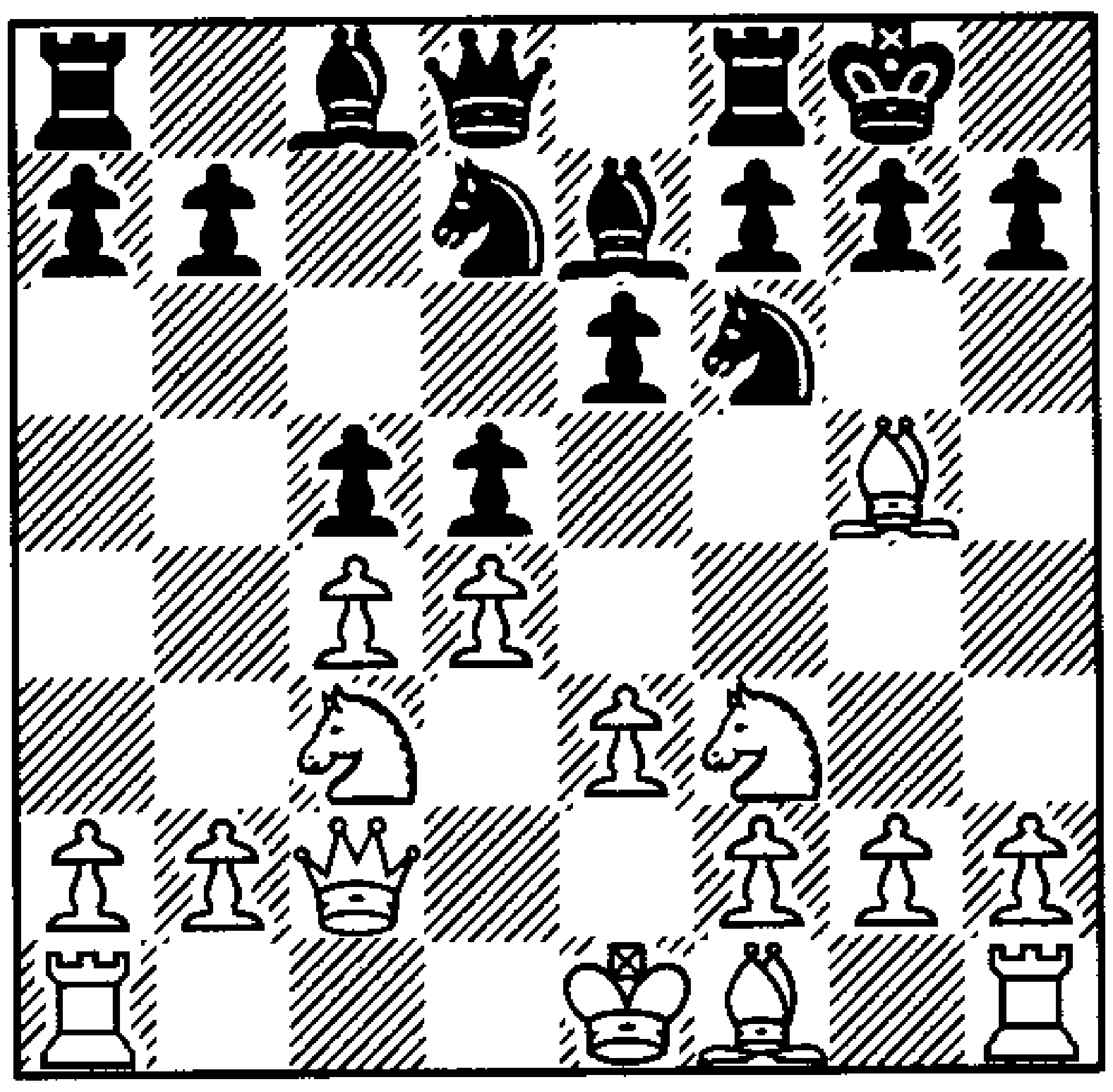


7...c5!

More passive is 7...b6 (*Game No.60*) or 7...c6 (fourth game), when 8 ♖d1! is strong.

Rubinstein himself first played 7...h6, removing the pawn from attack in the event of 8 ♗h4 (8 h4!? c5!) 8...c5! 9 cxd5 ♘xd5 10 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 11 ♘xd5 exd5 12 ♗d3?! – now Black has a tempo for 12...c4; while if 12 dxc5 ♘xc5 13 ♗e2, then 13...♗g4 or 13...♗e6 is equal.

Therefore in a game with Portisch (Brussels 1986) I risked sacrificing the bishop by 8 cxd5!? Portisch did not accept the challenge, but replied 8...exd5, and after 9 ♗f4! c5 (9...c6 10 0-0-0!) 10 ♗e2 b6 11 0-0 ♗b7 12 ♖fd1 ♖c8 13 dxc5 bxc5 (13...♘xc5 14 ♕f5!) 14 a4! ♕a5? (14...a5 was better) 15 ♘h4! ♖fd8 16 ♘f5 ♗f8 17 ♘b5 ♘e8 (17...♗a8 18 ♕c3!) 18 ♗d6! he ran into difficulties. The variation 8...hxg5 9 dxe6 fxe6 10 ♘g5 ♘b6 11 h4! is hard to evaluate, but in practice Black is not burning with the desire to take such a piece...



8 ♖d1

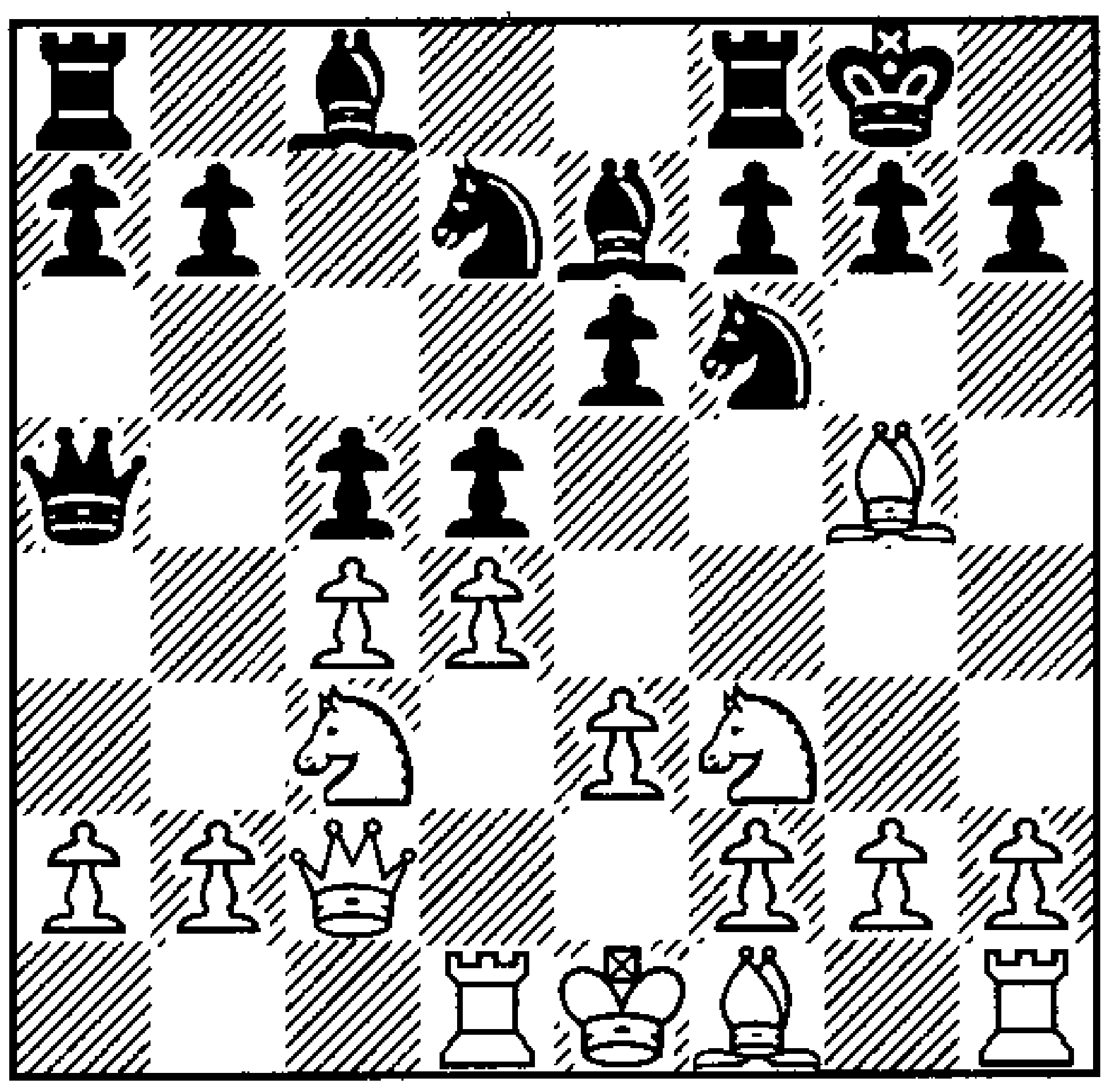
The sharp plan with 8 0-0-0 has lost its popularity due to 8...♕a5! 9 cxd5 exd5 10 dxc5 ♘xc5 11 ♘d4 (it is extremely dangerous to take the d5-pawn) 11...♗e6 12 ♔b1 ♖ac8 13 ♗d3 h6 14 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15 ♗f5 ♖fd8 16 ♗xe6 fxe6 17 ♕g6 ♖d6 with advantage to Black (Rotlewi-Teichmann, Carlsbad 1911).

Many years later, in a game with Fichtl (Prague 1943), Keres played 9 ♔b1! and won after 9...cxd4 10 exd4 dxc4 11 ♗xc4 ♘b6 12 ♗b3 ♗d7 13 ♘e5 ♖ac8 14 ♕e2 ♘bd5? (14...♖fd8 15 h4! and ♖h3 is unclear) 15 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 16 ♘xd7! Theory began recommending 9...h6 with the idea of 10 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 11 ♘e5 cxd4 12 exd4 ♗b4 equalising, and 10 h4 was considered incorrect because of 10...cxd4 11 ♘xd4 (*? – G.K.*) 11...dxc4 12 ♗xc4 ♘b6 13 ♗b3 hxg5! 14 hxg5 ♕xg5 15 f4 ♕g6.

However, in the game Kasparov-Marovic (Banja Luka 1979) White did in fact play 10 h4!? dxc4 (if 10...cxd4, then 11 exd4! hxg5? 12 hxg5 ♘e4 13 ♘xe4 dxe4 14 c5! with a strong attack) 11 ♗xc4 ♘b6?! (better is 11...cxd4 12 exd4 ♘b6 13 ♗b3 ♗d7 14 ♘e5 ♖ac8 15 ♖h3! with chances for both sides) 12 ♗xf6 gxf6 (after 12...♗xf6 13 ♘e4 cxd4 14 ♘xf6+ gxf6 15 ♖xd4 ♘xc4 16 ♖g4+! ♔h8 17 ♖xc4 e5 the pretty 18 ♘g5! fxg5 19 hxg5 e4 20 ♖c5 ♕b4 21 a3! is decisive) 13 ♗e2 cxd4 14 exd4 ♗d7 15 ♖h3! with an obvious advantage.

Even so, this bloodthirsty line is dubious, and nowadays White prefers to fight for a small plus: 8 cxd5 ♘xd5 9 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 10 ♘xd5 exd5 11 ♗d3 g6 12 dxc5 ♘xc5 13 0-0 (13 ♖c1 ♘xd3+ 14 ♕xd3 ♗f5! with a rapid draw, Alekhine-Capablanca, Buenos Aires 10th matchgame 1927) 13...♗g4 14 ♘d4 etc. (a recent example: Nikolic-Piket, Wijk aan Zee 2000).

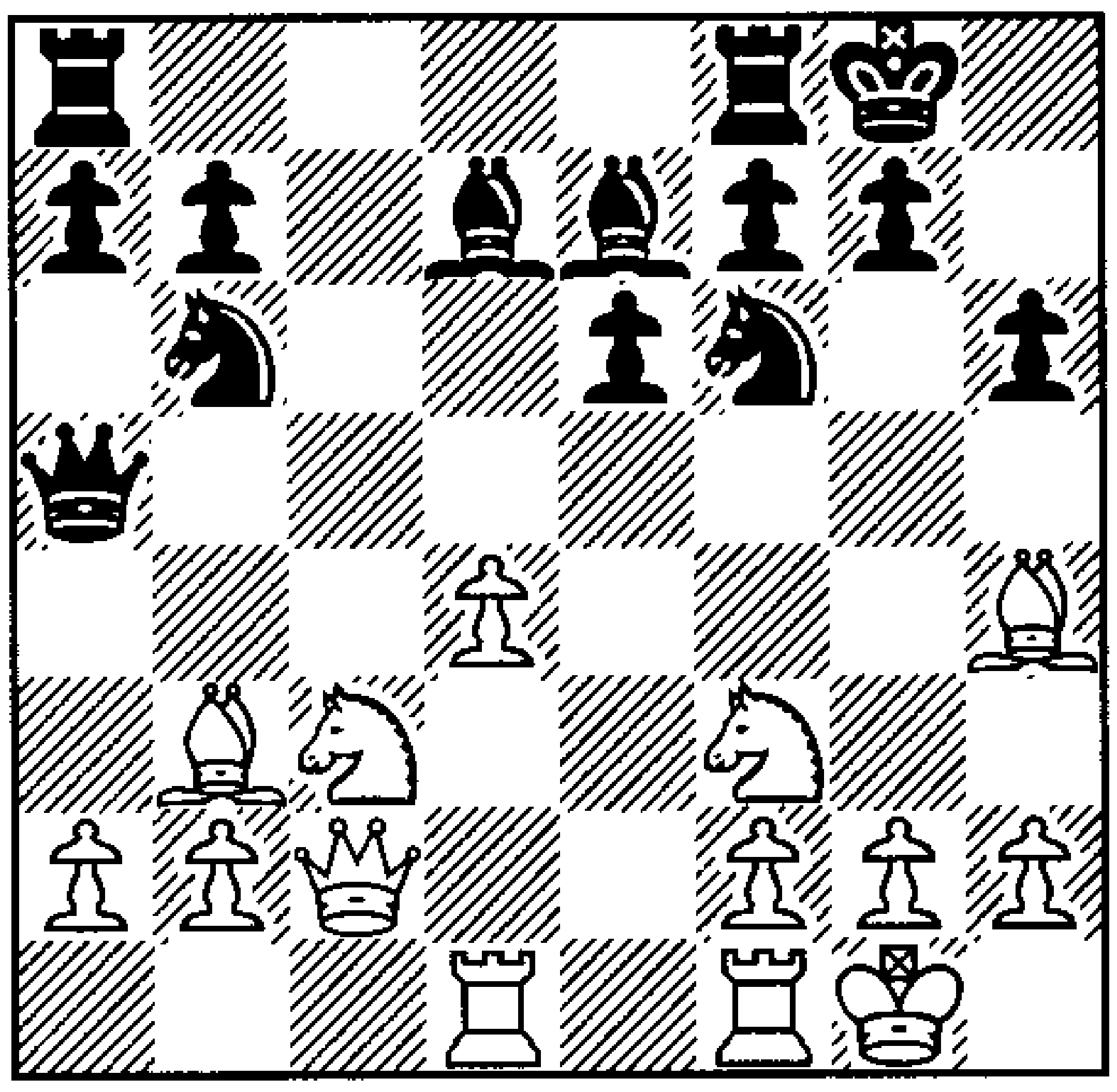
8...♕a5



9 ♗d3

The seventh game, where Capa was White, went 9 cxd5 ♘xd5 10 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 11 ♗d3 ♘f6 12 0-0 cxd4 13 ♘xd4 ♗d7 14 ♘e4 ♘ed5 15 ♘b3 ♕d8 16 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 17 ♕c5 ♕b6 18 ♖c1 ♖fc8 19 ♕xb6 axb6 20 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 21 ♖c1 ♖xc1+ 22 ♘xc1 ♔f8 ½-½.

9...h6 10 ♗h4 cxd4 (according to Alekhine, 10...♘b6! is sounder) **11 exd4 dxc4 12 ♗xc4 ♘b6 13 ♗b3 ♗d7 14 0-0**



14...♖ac8

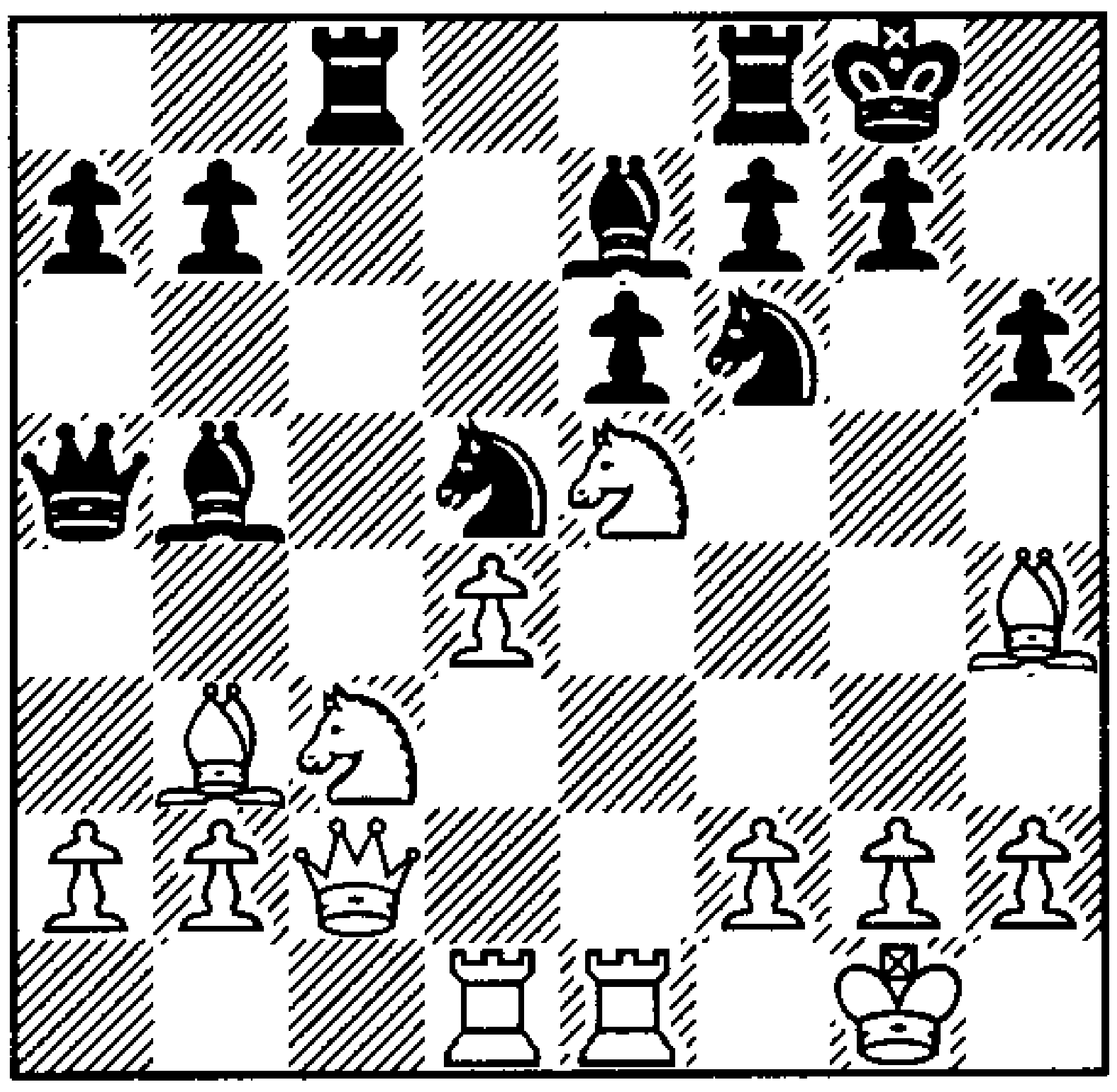
A classic set-up in the spirit of Steinitz (cf. *Game No.18*). Inferior is 14...♗c6 15 ♘e5 ♗d5?! (14...♖ac8!) 16 ♘xd5 ♘bxd5 17 ♕e2 ♖ad8 18 f4! ♘e8?! 19 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 20 f5 ♘xf5 21 ♘xf7! with a decisive attack (Stahlberg-Capablanca, Moscow 1935).

15 ♘e5 (Tartakower suggested 15 ♕e2!?)

15...♗b5

'This is a weak move which might have given Black a great deal of trouble. The simple and logical move 15...♗c6, threatening ...♗d5, would have given Black an excellent game.' (Capablanca) Although the aforementioned game against Stahlberg does not confirm this...

16 ♖fe1 ♘bd5



The first critical moment. Lasker's next move shows that the typical methods of playing positions with an isolated d-pawn had not yet been mastered.

17 ♗xd5?

A completely unnecessary exchange, denying White all hopes of an advantage (a similar mistake was made by Zukertort – *Game No.18*). Whereas Breyer's suggestion of 17 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 (17...♘xf6? 18 ♘g6! ♖fe8 19 ♖xe6 wins) 18 ♗xd5 exd5 19 ♕f5! would have set Black problems:

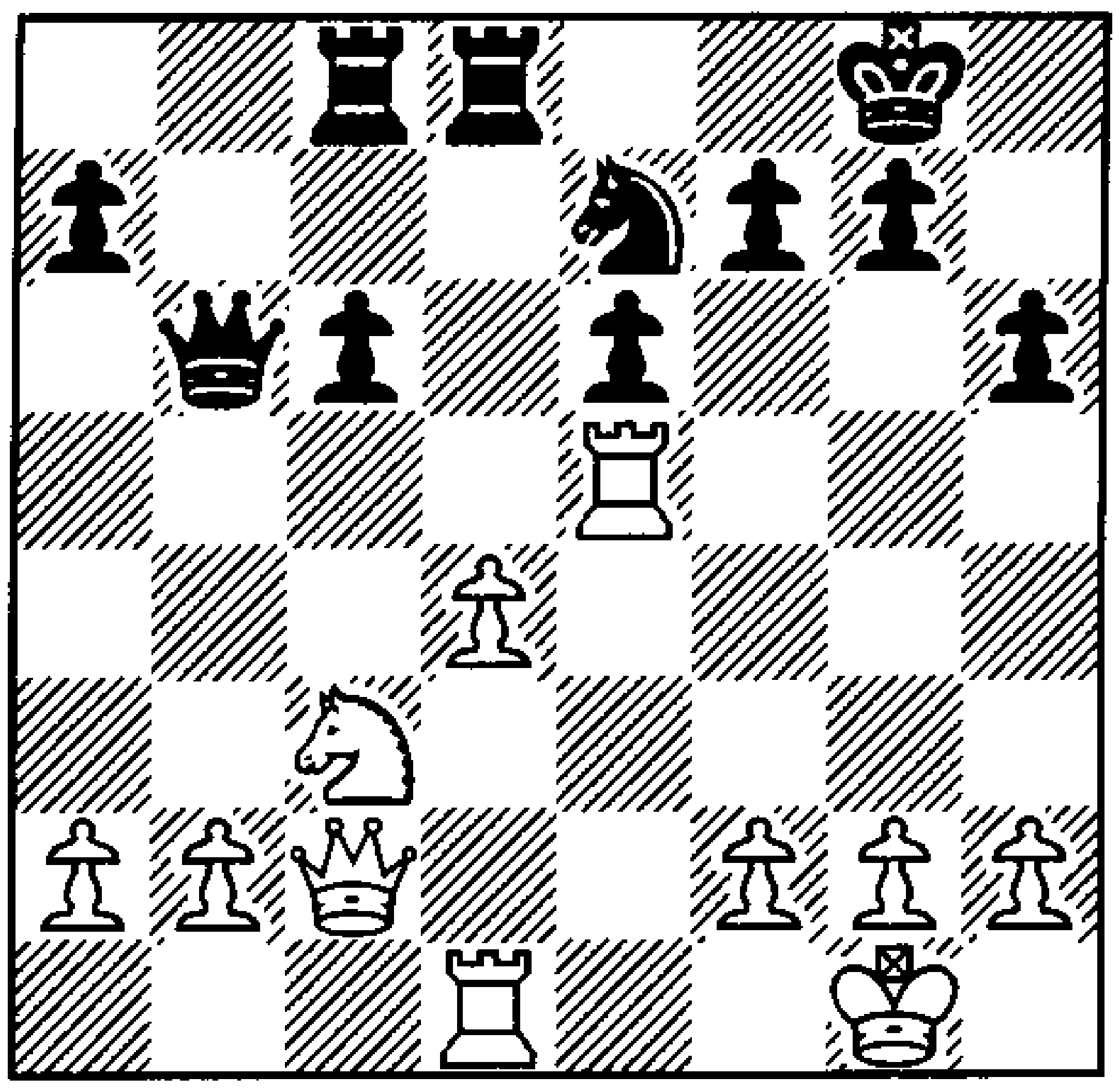
1) 19...♗c6 (Bogoljubow) 20 ♘g4! (20 ♘d7 ♗xd7 21 ♕xd7 ♖fd8! 22 ♕f5! ♖c4! 23 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 24 ♖e8+ ♖xe8 25 ♕xd5 ♖xd4 26 ♕f3 ♖xd1+ 27 ♕xd1 ♗xb2 is equal) 20...♗g5 21 f4 g6 22 ♘f6+! (previously they only considered 22 ♕e5?! ♖ce8 23 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 24 ♕xf6 ♕b4! with equal chances) 22...♗xf6 (not 22...♔g7? 23 ♘h5+! ♔h7 24 ♕e5) 23 ♕xf6 with a dangerous initiative;

2) 19...♗xe5!? (apparently the best defence) 20 ♖xe5 (20 dxe5 ♗c4!) 20...♗c4 21 a3 ♕b6 22 ♖d2 with some pressure.

17...♘xd5 18 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 19 ♕b3 ♗c6 20 ♘xc6 bxc6 21 ♖e5

'If 21 ♘a4, then 21...♖fd8 (with the threat of ...♖xd4) 22 ♖e5 ♖d5!' (Panov) Apparently Lasker, true to his match strategy, did not object to a draw, and thought that the weakness on d4 would be offset by the weakness on c6. But, as becomes clear, the d-pawn is weaker and it is not so simple for White to draw.

21...♕b6 22 ♕c2 ♖fd8



23 ♘e2?

Too passive! 'The rook went to e5 to control c5, therefore 23 ♘a4 was the right move.' (Lasker) Of course, 23 ♘a4! is what White should have played (but not 23 ♖c5? ♖xd4!) – although after 23...♕b8 24 ♖c5 ♘f5 25 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 26 ♕xc6 ♘xd4 27 ♕e4! e5 Black would have retained a microscopic plus, with accurate play White should nevertheless have been able to draw. Now he has problems.

23...♖d5! 24 ♖xd5

'A worse mistake than the previous move. After 24 ♖e3 ♘f5 25 ♖b3 ♕d8 26 ♖b4 White gains time later by ♖c4, or ♖a4, or g2-g4.' (Lasker) 'But after 26...♕d7 with the threats of 27...e5 or 27...♖d8 White has a difficult position.' (Panov) I should add that 26 ♖bd3 is also insufficient in view of 26...♕d7 27 b4 ♖d8 28 h3 e5! etc.

24...cxd5

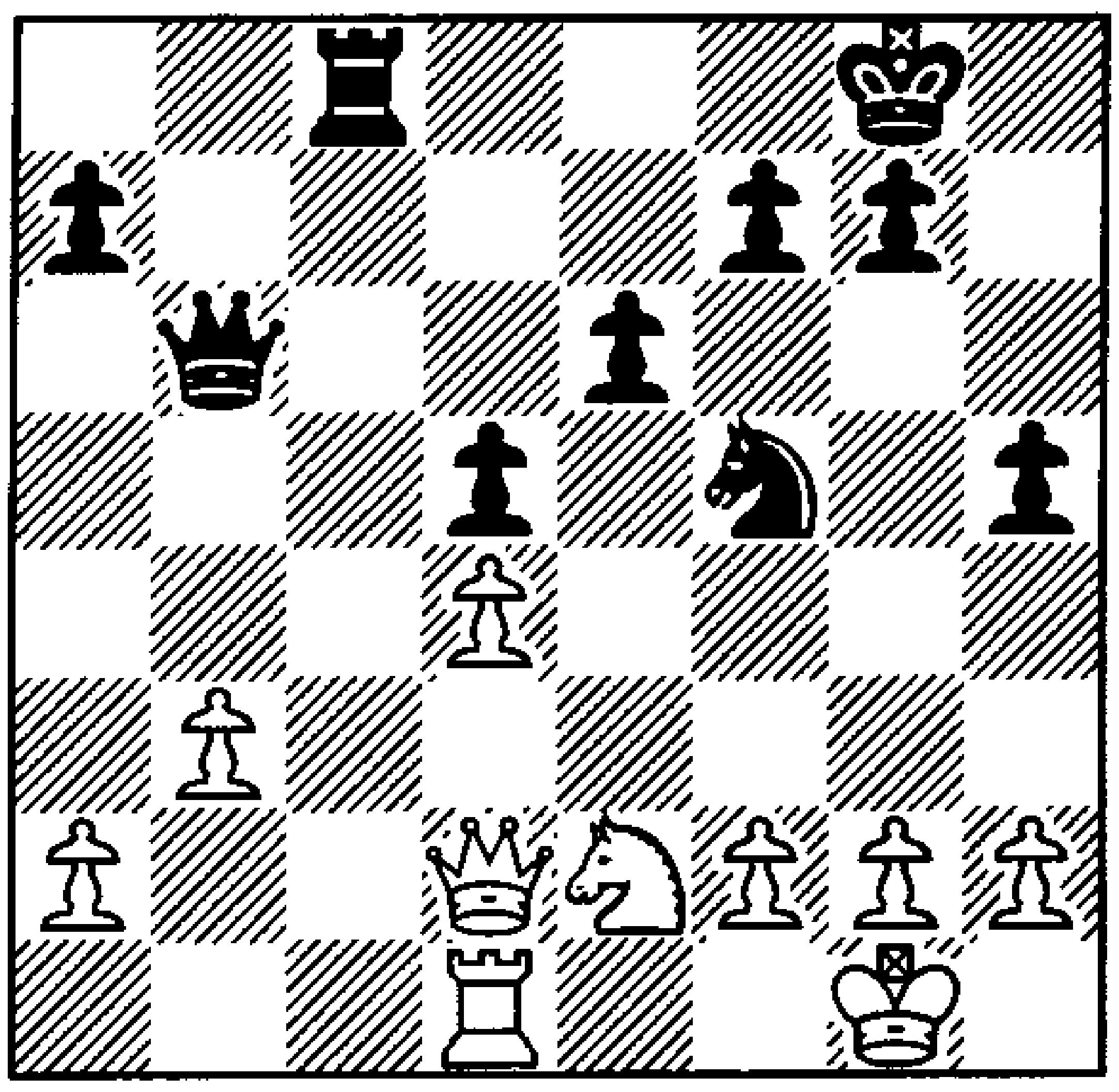
'From now on the student will do well to study carefully every move up to the end. It is one of Black's best efforts in his whole career, and that against one of the strongest players the world has ever seen.' (Capablanca)

25 ♕d2 ♘f5 26 b3?!

According to Lasker, 26 g3 was better.

26...h5

'To prevent g2-g4 at any time.' (Capablanca) 'A hasty move, as a result of which Black almost missed the win. 26...g6 should have been played.' (Panov) But I don't see what would have changed after 27 ♘g3.



27 h3?

'A completely bad move, allowing Black to paralyse the white pawns.' (Lasker) 'Necessary was 27 ♘g3! ♘xg3 28 hxg3, transposing into a heavy piece endgame with excellent drawing chances.' (Panov) However, even here after 28...♕c7 White, with his weak pawns, would all the same have faced a cheerless defence.

27...h4!

After the blockade of the kingside the number of weaknesses in White's position exceeds the permissible norm, and he is now strategically lost.

28 ♕d3 ♖c6 29 ♔f1 g6 30 ♕b1 ♕b4 31 ♔g1 a5!

'This decides the outcome. From here and to the end of the game Black plays with merciless consistency. Capablanca's style is irreproachable.' (Lasker)

32 ♕b2 a4

Giving White yet another weakness – at b3. 33...♖b6 and ...axb3 is threatened.

33 ♕d2 (an attempt to save himself in the endgame) **33...♕xd2 34 ♖xd2 axb3 35 axb3 ♖b6! 36 ♖d3**

But not 36 ♖b2? ♖b4 winning a pawn.

36...♖a6! 37 g4

White can no longer mark time, as otherwise the breakthrough of the rook is decisive: 37 ♘c3 ♖a1+ 38 ♔h2 ♖c1 39 b4 ♖c2 40 ♔g1 ♖b2 41 b5 ♖b4. But now too Black gradually wins material.

37...hxg3 38 fxg3 (or 38 ♘xg3 ♖a1+ 39 ♔g2 ♘d6 40 ♔f3 ♖b1 winning) **38...♖a2 39 ♘c3 ♖c2** (with the threat of ...♘xd4) **40 ♘d1 ♘e7 41 ♘c3 ♖c1+ 42 ♔f2 ♘c6 43 ♘d1!**

A pretty trap.

43...♖b1!

Avoiding 43...♘b4?! 44 ♖d2 ♖b1 45 ♘b2 ♖xb2? 46 ♖xb2 ♘d3+ 47 ♔e2 ♘xb2 48 ♔d2! ♔f8 49 ♔c2 trapping the knight: 49...♘c4 50 bxc4 dxc4 51 ♔c3 ♔e7 52 ♔xc4 draws.

44 ♔e2?

Finally White blunders a pawn. Of course, more tenacious was 44 ♔e1 ♘a5 45 ♔d2! ♖xb3 46 ♖xb3 ♘xb3+ 47 ♔c3 'with drawing chances in view of the insignificant amount of material remaining on the board,' (Panov) although objectively this knight endgame a pawn down is also lost (knight endgames being like pawn endgames!).

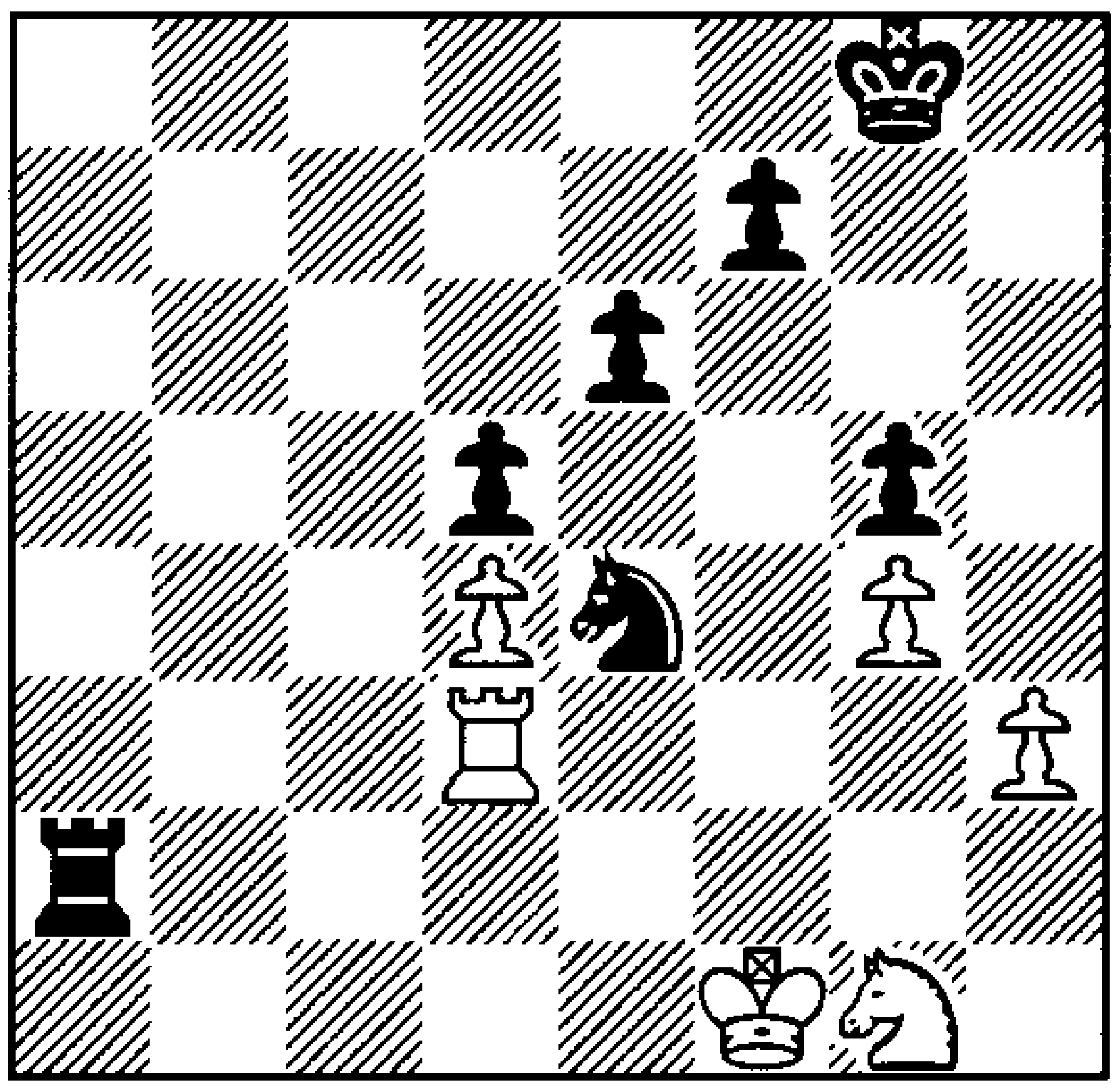
44...♖xb3! 45 ♔e3 ♖b4!

It is clearly simpler to convert the advantage with the rooks on. And in the given instance this simplicity and inevitability, typical of Capa, creates a particular impression, because playing White was the great Lasker!

46 ♘c3 ♘e7 47 ♘e2 ♘f5+ 48 ♔f2 g5 49 g4 ♘d6 50 ♘g1 ♘e4+ 51 ♔f1

Or 51 ♔f3 ♖b1 52 ♘e2 ♖f1+ 53 ♔e3 ♖h1 and wins.

51...♖b1+ 52 ♔g2 ♖b2+ 53 ♔f1 ♖f2+ 54 ♔e1 ♖a2 55 ♔f1



55...♔g7

After tying down the opponent's pieces, Black activates his king.

56 ♖e3 ♔g6 57 ♖d3 f6 58 ♖e3 ♔f7 59 ♖d3 ♔e7 60 ♖e3 ♔d6 61 ♖d3 ♖f2+ 62 ♔e1 ♖g2 63 ♔f1 ♖a2 64 ♖e3 e5 65 ♖d3 exd4 66 ♖xd4 (or 66 ♘e2 ♔c5 67 ♘xd4 ♔c4 68 ♖d1 ♘c3) **66...♔c5 67 ♖d1 d4 68 ♖c1+ ♔d5 0-1**

69 ♖d1 ♘g3+ 70 ♔e1 ♖g2 wins.

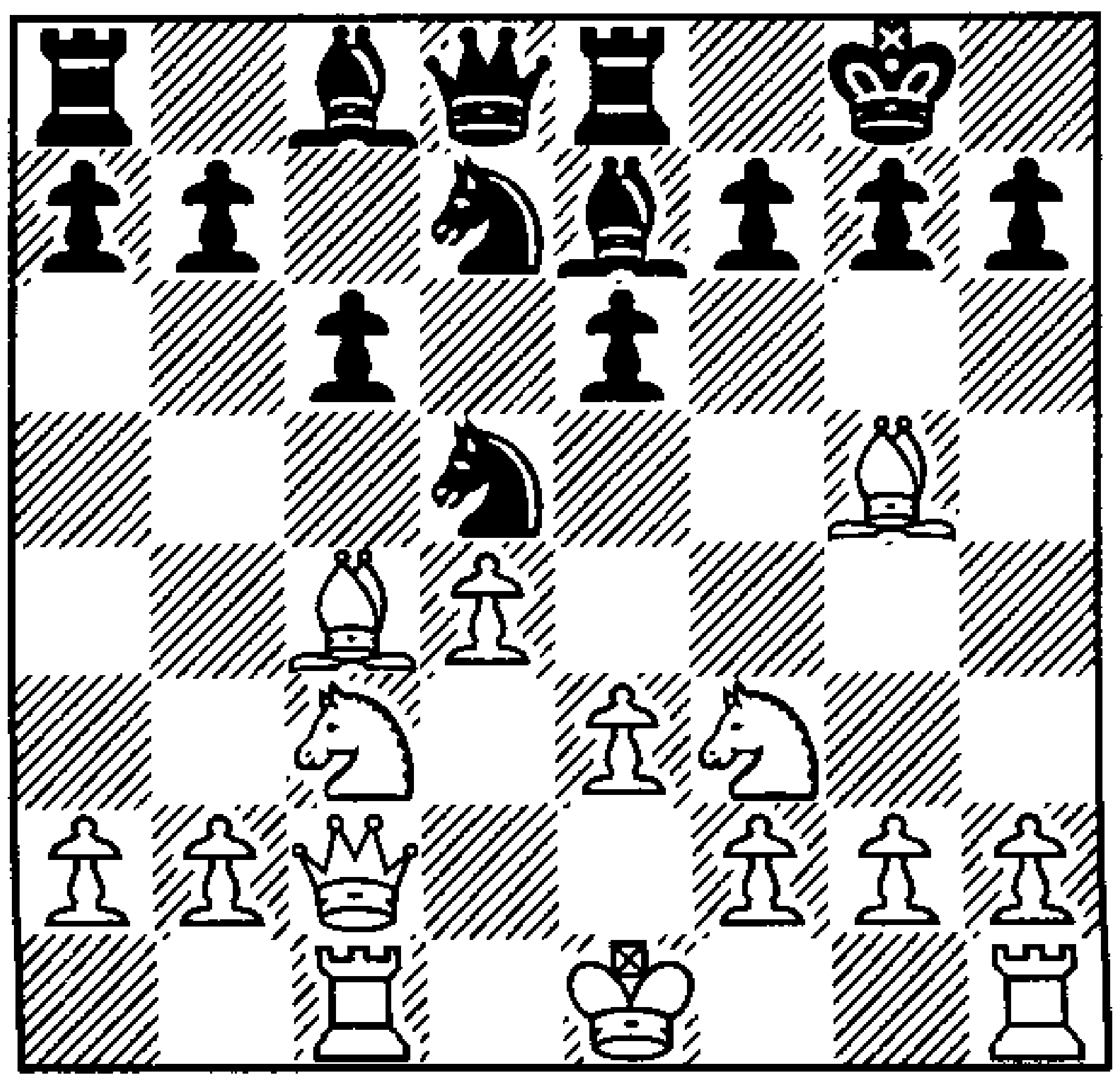
This heavy defeat with White was the last straw for the champion. Of course, Lasker did not play as well as he could have done, but he had not previously encountered such an iron grip. Others used to give Lasker chances, but not Capa! And Lasker, that great psychologist, had to become accustomed to this sort of play, and try to find an antidote to it. But in his condition during the match in Havana he was unable to find the solution to this problem.

In the 11th game Lasker resorted to extreme measures – he drew the enemy fire, playing the opening deliberately passively, *à la* Steinitz. Diverging from the rules, he sharply upset the positional balance and exceeded the bounds of acceptable risk. He had also used this method before: it didn't matter about the position, the main thing was to retain as many pieces as possible!

But this decision proved to be radically flawed: it was as though Capablanca had been awaiting such a turn of events. He joined battle, seized space and began relentlessly suffocating his opponent.

Game 91
J.R.Capablanca-Em.Lasker
World Championship Match,
Havana 1921, 11th game
Queen's Gambit D63

1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 c4 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♘bd7 5 e3 ♗e7 6 ♘c3 0-0 7 ♖c1 ♖e8?! (7...c6!) **8 ♕c2! c6 9 ♗d3** (9 a3!?) **9...dxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♘d5**



On one occasion Capablanca himself was unsuccessful with 10...b5?! (*Game No.82*).

11 ♗xe7 (11 ♘e4 ♕a5+!, but 11 ♗f4!? ♘xf4 12 exf4 is interesting) **11...♖xe7?!**

The normal course would be 11...♕xe7 12 0-0 ♘xc3 13 ♕xc3 e5 with hopes of equality and a draw.

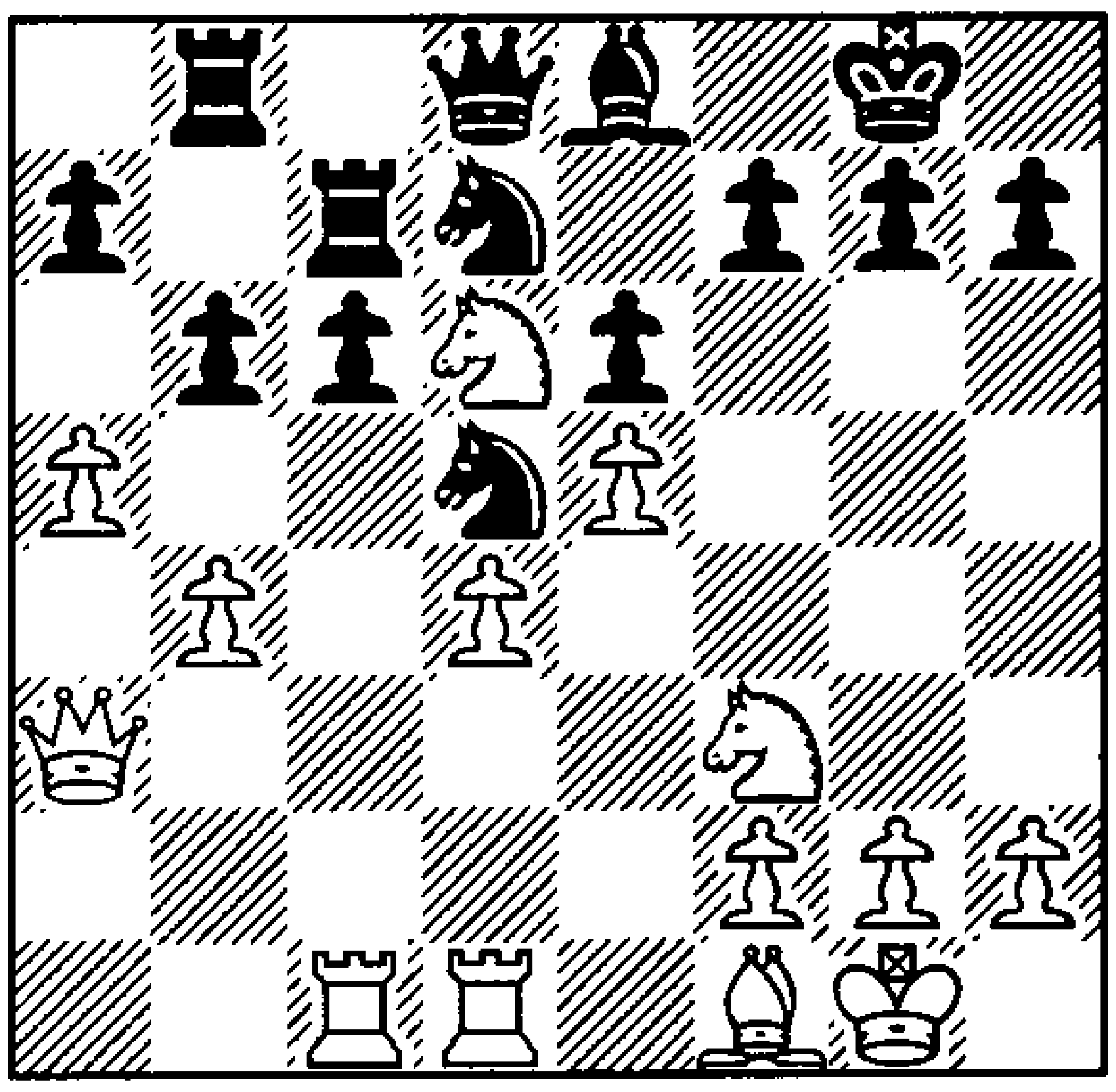
12 0-0 ♘f8?! (12...♘xc3 13 ♕xc3 b6 was nevertheless better) **13 ♖fd1 ♗d7 14 e4 ♘b6?!** (14...♘xc3) **15 ♗f1 ♖c8 16 b4! ♗e8**

'The defensive position is Steinitzian in its character, with most of the pieces massed on the last two rows. There are no weak points in Black's game, but his position suffers from lack of space for his pieces to manoeuvre.' (Capablanca)

17 ♕b3 ♖ec7 18 a4 ♘g6 19 a5 ♘d7 20 e5

White methodically increases his spatial advantage, opening the way for his knight to d6.

20...b6 21 ♘e4 ♖b8 22 ♕c3 (the immediate 22 ♕a3! is more accurate, not allowing Black a tempo for ...♘g6-f4-d5) **22...♘f4 23 ♘d6 ♘d5 24 ♕a3**

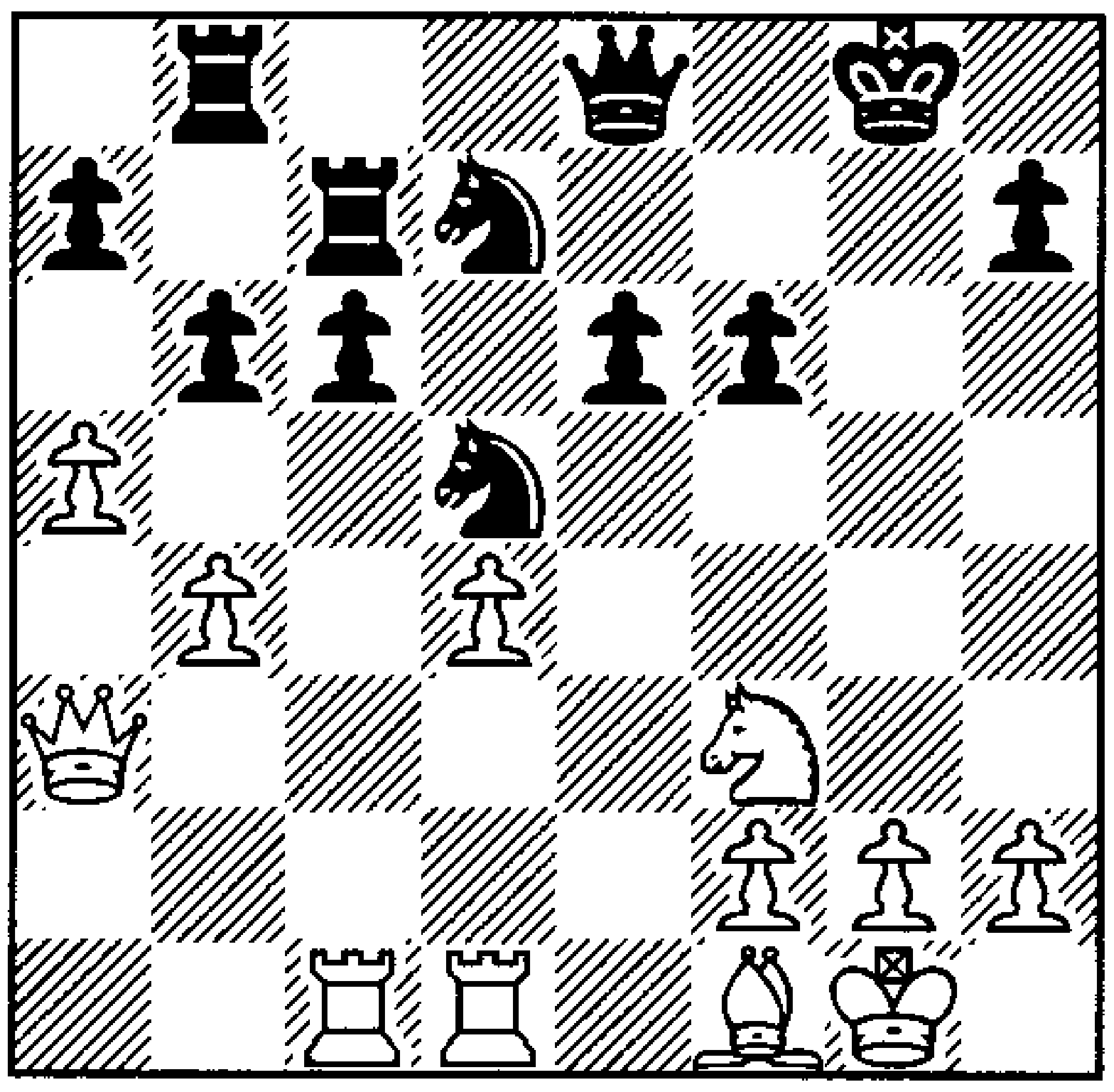


24...f6

With the correct idea of ...♗h5, but Levenfish and Panov recommended first 24...♕e7! (to answer ♘xe8 with ...♖xe8, keeping the b4-pawn under fire). This would appear to be more accurate, for example: 25 ♗c4!? (with the threat of ♗xd5 and ♘b5) 25...♘f8 26 ♗a2 f6 etc.

25 ♘xe8! ♕xe8 26 exf6 gxf6

26...♘7xf6?! 27 ♘e5 was dubious. After parting with his powerful knight without regrets, White has transformed his advantage: now Black's king is open, which with the queens on will sooner or later make itself felt.



27 b5

Perhaps 27 ♗c4!? was better. But the move in the game, which is often accompanied by an exclamation mark, is also quite logical: 'The exposed position of the black king is rather inviting for an attack, but before going into it White must liquidate his queenside pawns in order to remove all possible sources of weakness. Once those two pawns are exchanged, White can devote all his attention to the attack against the king without having anything to worry about on the other side.' (Capablanca)

27...♖bc8!

The most tenacious defence. 'Here 27...c5 would be met by 28 dxc5 bxc5 29 ♗c4 and Black's position would be untenable.' (Capablanca) But stronger here is 28...♘xc5! 29 ♘d4 ♖bc8 with an unclear game. Therefore 28 axb6 axb6 29 ♗c4! is correct, 'and Black's position collapses.' (Panov)

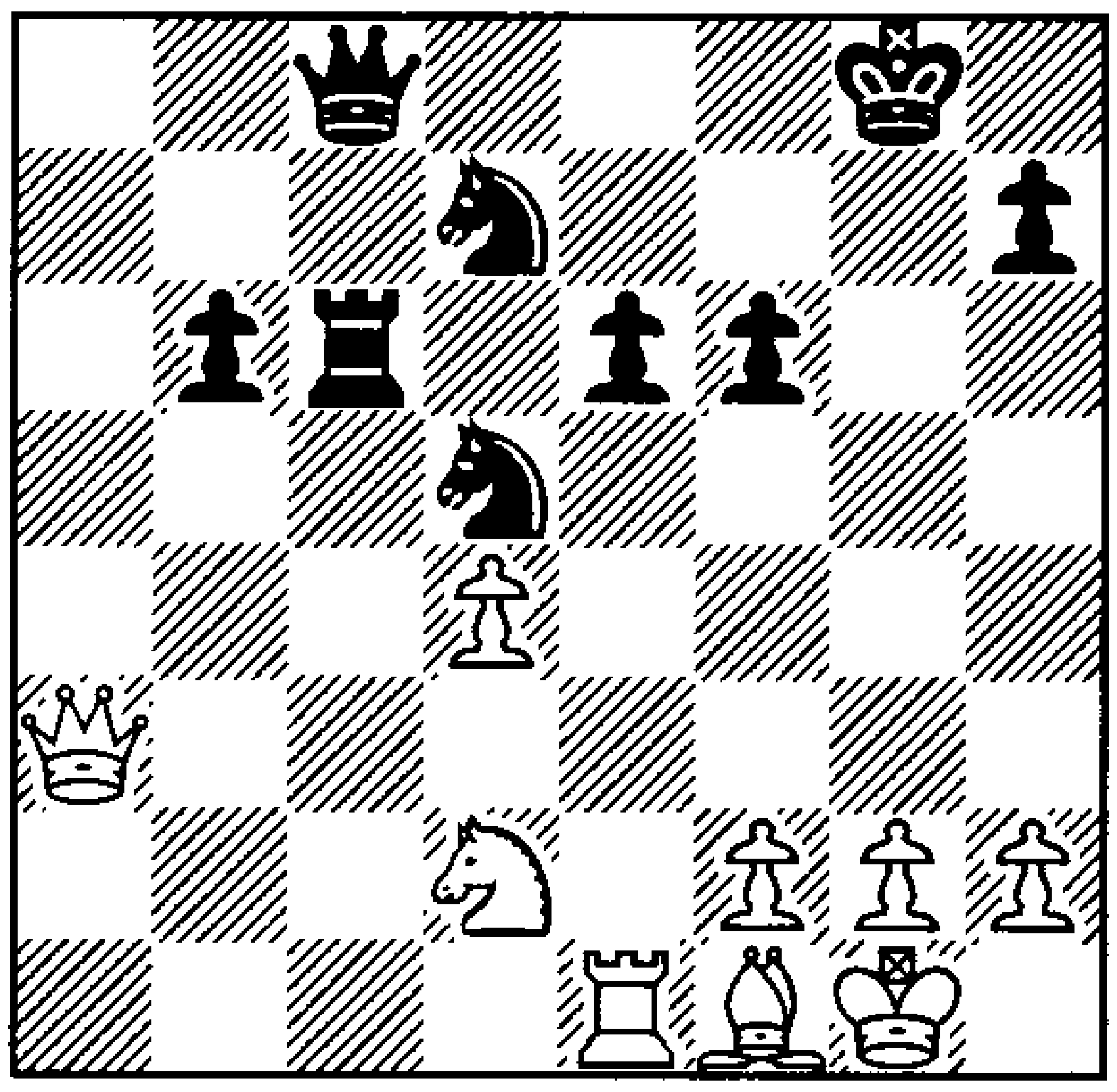
Also bad was 27...cxb5?! 28 ♖xc7 ♘xc7 29 ♕d6 ♖c8 (29...♘d5 30 ♗xb5) 30 d5! e5 (30...exd5 31 ♖e1!) 31 axb6 axb6 32 ♗d3 with a decisive attack.

28 bxc6 ♖xc6 29 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 30 axb6 axb6

After the exchanges on the queenside Black has nevertheless gained some counterplay on the c-file and hopes of an acceptable endgame.

31 ♖e1 ♕c8 (if 31...♕f8, then 32 ♕b3) **32 ♘d2!**

The time has come to activate the knight.



32...♘f8?!

'Better is 32...♖c3! 33 ♕a1 ♘f8 34 ♘e4 ♖c7, gaining an important tempo.' (Lasker) I agree: after 35 g3 White has a marked advantage, but even so not as great as in the game. Incidentally, many recommended 33 ♕d6 (instead of 33 ♕a1!) 33...♘f8 (33...♖c6?! 34 ♕g3+ ♔h8 35 ♘e4!) 34 ♘e4 ♖c6 35 ♕a3, overlooking 34...♖c1! with the exchange of rooks and a probable draw.

33 ♘e4 ♕d8 34 h4!

Preventing ...f6-f5.

34...♖c7

Playing the rook onto the seventh rank leads to the conceding of the c-file. Bad was 34...f5?! 35 ♕g3+! ♔h8 36 ♕e5+ ♔g8 37 ♗b5 ♖c7 38 ♘g5 ♖e7 39 ♗c4 ♘g6 40 ♕g3 winning. In Capablanca's opinion, the best chance was 34...h6!? with the threat of driving back the knight by ...f6-f5. In any event, the black king's shelter is insecure.

35 ♕b3 ♖g7! 36 g3 ♖a7 37 ♗c4 ♖a5

Not falling for 37...h6? 38 ♗xd5 exd5 39 ♕xd5+! ♕xd5 40 ♘xf6+ ♔f7 41 ♘xd5 winning.

38 ♘c3!

After the exchange of the key knight at d5

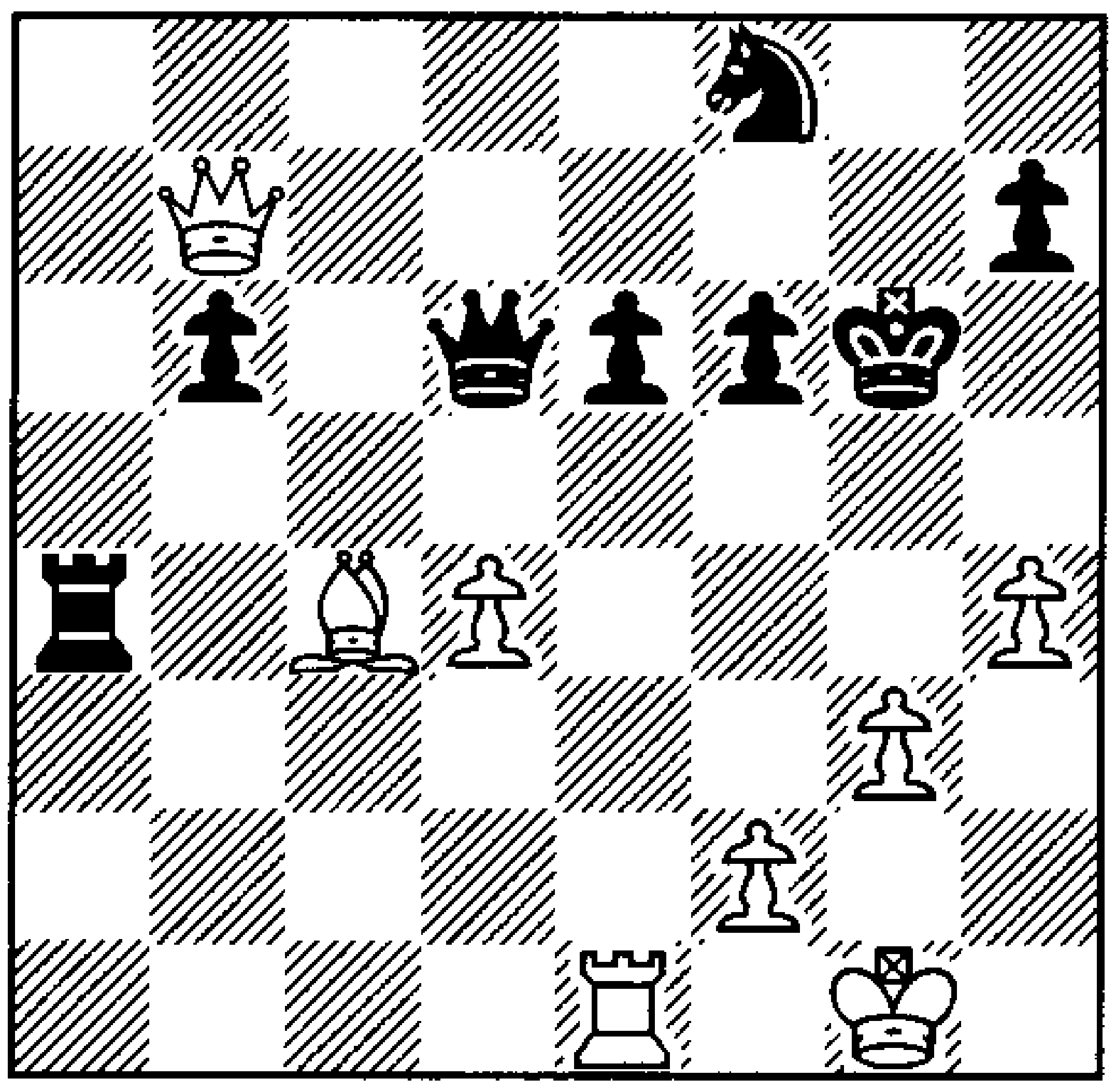
Black's weaknesses will be indefensible.

38...♘xc3 39 ♕xc3 ♔f7 40 ♕e3 ♕d6 41 ♕e4 ♖a4?

'Suicide!' (Lasker) 'The same losing picture as in the previous games of this match! Initially the world champion plays the opening carelessly and finds himself in an inferior position, then by skilful defence he achieves an almost drawn position, but in the end, worn out by his indefatigable opponent, he begins to make mistakes. 41...♖a7 42 d5 e5 was correct, although even then the manoeuvre ♗c4-f1-h3 would have retained the advantage for White.' (Panov)

42 ♕b7+ ♔g6

If 42...♕e7, then 43 ♕c6 ♖a7 44 d5. Slightly more tenacious was 42...♔g8 43 ♕c8 ♔f7 44 d5 e5 45 ♗b5 ♖d4 46 ♕b7+ ♔g8 47 ♖a1 and White wins.



43 ♕c8?

It is surprising that none of the commentators has pointed out a pretty forced win: 43 h5+! ♔h6 44 ♕f7 ♕d8 45 ♗d3! ♖xd4 46 ♖xe6, and if 46...♖xd3 47 ♖xf6+ ♔g5 48 ♕g7+ ♘g6 49 ♖xg6+.

It would not have been so difficult for Capablanca to work out the combination, but... again what told was his inclination towards play on general grounds. In Havana 1921 this had no significance: his minor flaws went unnoticed, because Lasker did not exploit them. Before Alekhine, no one could force Capa to really work! And the latter, naturally, was accustomed to winning with little effort. However, in Buenos Aires 1927 this habit was to cost the Cuban dearly...

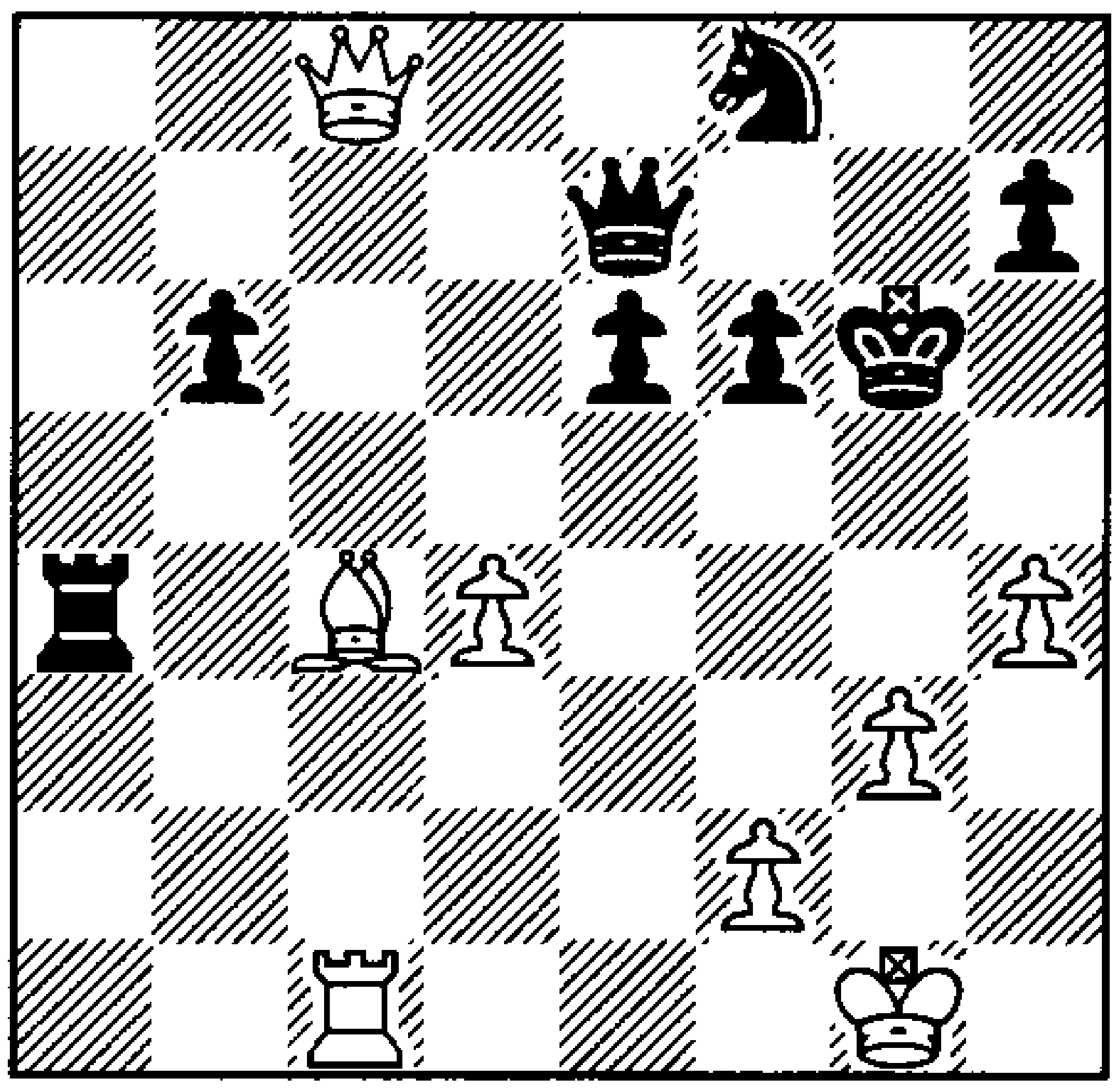
43...♕b4?

Alas, Lasker promptly makes a mistake in reply, allowing his opponent to conclude the game spectacularly. After 43...♖a7! White would have had to win the game anew: 44 ♕e8+ (44 ♗xe6?! ♘xe6 45 ♖xe6 ♕xd4 is level) 44...♔g7! etc.

44 ♖c1! ♕e7?!

If 44...♕a3 Capa gives 45 ♗d3+ f5 (45...♕xd3? 46 ♕e8+; 45...♔h6? 46 ♖c7 with the threat of 47 ♕xf8+ ♕xf8 48 ♖xh7 mate) 46 ♕e8+ ♔h6 47 ♖e1 (the computer prefers 47 ♖c7!? ♖xd4 48 ♗e2 ♘g6 49 ♕g8 and wins) 47...♖a8 48 ♖xe6+ ♘xe6 49 ♕xe6+ ♔g7 50 ♕e5+ with mate.

Meanwhile the best defence was still 44...♖a7!, after which White would have had a pleasant choice between 45 ♗xe6 ♘xe6 46 ♕xe6 ♕xd4 47 ♖c4 ♕e5 48 ♖g4+ ♔h6 49 ♕xb6 and 45 d5!? ♕d2 46 ♗b3.



45 ♗d3+! ♔h6 (after 45...f5, apart from the sharp 46 ♗xf5+, there is also the cold 46 ♖c7) **46 ♖c7 ♖a1+ 47 ♔g2 ♕d6 48 ♕xf8+! 1-0**

'This game shows Capablanca's style in its most favourable light: energetic, but cautious play, striving to create a sound position, from which it is easy to launch an attack.' (Lasker)

The score became +3 in Capablanca's

favour, and after two draws things came to a head: by blundering (again) the champion lost the 14th game, which he had begun quite well, and... on the advice of his doctor he resigned the match. 'Towards the end of the fourth hour, just before the time control, I was almost exhausted and with several obvious errors I ruined my entire strategic plan,' Lasker lamented. 'I was looking at the board as though through a mist, and my head ached suspiciously. This was a warning to me, and I heeded it.'

And so, Capablanca won ahead of schedule with a score of 9-5 (+4 =10) and became the third world champion in the history of chess. It can only be regretted that this match was played in Havana, and not somewhere in the USA or Europe, in a climate to which Lasker was accustomed. Then he would not have committed the blunders that were so atypical of him... However, it is probable that even in this case the Cuban's chances would have been somewhat better.

The wise Lasker endured his defeat with enviable dignity and generosity. In his final report from the match, and in a small book *Mein Wettkampf mit Capablanca* that was soon published, he paid tribute to his opponent:

'Capablanca's play set me genuine problems. His games are clear, logical and strong. In them there is nothing hidden, artificial or laboured... Although they are transparent, they are by no means banal and are often deep. Capablanca does not like unclear positions and gambles. He likes to know beforehand where he is going. The depth of his play is the depth of a mathematician, not of a poet. He has the soul of a Roman, not of a Greek...

'Is Capablanca the ideal, the ultimate chess champion? I don't think so. But he deserves the title of world champion. His style is extremely distinctive, accurate and inventive, logical and energetic... When Steinitz lost the last game of the match to me, he stood up and exclaimed: 'Three hurrahs for the new world champion!' These words touched me. The debt of honour obliges me to address the chess world with the same words.'

Nimzowitsch and Hypermodernism

Under the influence of the series of draws in the Havana match, both players began talking about the threat of a drawing death in chess. 'The game of chess is approaching perfection,' wrote Lasker. 'From it the elements of play and uncertainty are disappearing. In our time too much is known; there is not, therefore, the need to guess, as we, the older masters, had to do in the days of our youth. Regrettable though it is, knowledge entails death. I have always been opposed to research. But Pillsbury began studying the openings as far as the most clear conclusions, and his method triumphed. Now all players know the best opening moves of the Queen's Gambit or the Ruy Lopez and feel at home in them... The charm of the unknown has disappeared.'

And later: 'Of course, chess will not keep its secrets for long. The fatal hour of this ancient game is approaching. In its modern form this game will soon die a drawing death – the inevitable victory of certainty and mechanisation will leave its stamp on the fate of chess. Then new rules will have to be devised...'

Capablanca also thought that within 10-15 years any 'good player will be able to draw any game' and he also thought about the reform of chess. He suggested increasing the board to 100 squares and in 1929 he even played with Maróczy an endlessly lengthy exhibition game on a board of 192 squares... As Alekhine joked, 'such projects are always put forward by players who have lost the world championship.'

In fact the fears of Lasker and Capablanca were a vivid illustration of the relative nature of human knowledge. Yes, they were the kings of the chess in which after 1 e4 they largely played 1...e5, less frequently 1...e6 and altogether rarely 1...c5, and after 1 d4 – almost exclusively 1...d5, restricting themselves to the Queen's Gambit Declined or Accepted. On this little 'chess island' they had raised technique to unprecedented heights, and it seemed to them that there was nowhere further to go.

However, with the years both champions saw that the territory of chess was far wider and that it was still a long way from exhausting all its possibilities. A considerable role here was played by the new trend of chess thinking, called 'hypermodernism'. Its pillars were Nimzowitsch, Réti and Breyer, and its supporters – Alekhine, Bogoljubow, Tartakower, Grünfeld... This important stage in the development of chess theory is something that we must dwell on in some detail.

The great chess theoretician and innovator Aron Nimzowitsch (1886-1935), who originated from Riga and lived in Copenhagen, substantially refined and expanded the operation of Steinitz's principles, by putting forward on their basis a number of truly revolutionary ideas. He began his researches with a sharp criticism of some of Tarrasch's dogmas. 'Steinitz had perhaps only one deficiency: he was ahead of his generation by at least 50 years!' declared Nimzowitsch in an article with the provocative title 'Does Dr Tarrasch's *Die moderne Schachpartie* correspond to the modern understanding of the game?' (1913)

I would remind you that Tarrasch and his numerous followers rated the role of central pawns in the opening excessively highly. For example, in the French Defence after 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 or 3 ♘d2 (Tarrasch's move) they severely criticised 3...dxe4. But Nimzowitsch retorted: 'This method of play has already been assiduously and lovingly cultivated for more than 20 years, in spite of all the purists and screams about the surrender of the centre. Moreover, with the move ...b7-b6 (Rubinstein) an improvement has been found which has cast doubts on the value of 3 ♘c3 and persuaded me to resurrect 3 e5, with which I, as is known, have gained great successes – again in spite of all the purists!'

And here the author gave the philosophical basis of this variation: 'White switches the attack from d5 to e6, which he fixes by e4-e5, in accordance with the rule: 'an object of attack must first be made immobile.' There arises a pawn chain, restricting the free manoeuvring of both sides. Naturally, one wants to break it up. With this aim the base of the chain must be attacked: Black – d4 (by ...c7-c5), and White – e6 (by f2-f4-f5)' etc.

But Tarrasch was actively opposed to the move 3 e5 here! It need hardly be said how critical and fierce was the following duel between the most prominent theoreticians of their time.

Game 92

A.Nimzowitsch-S.Tarrasch

San Sebastian 1912

French Defence C02

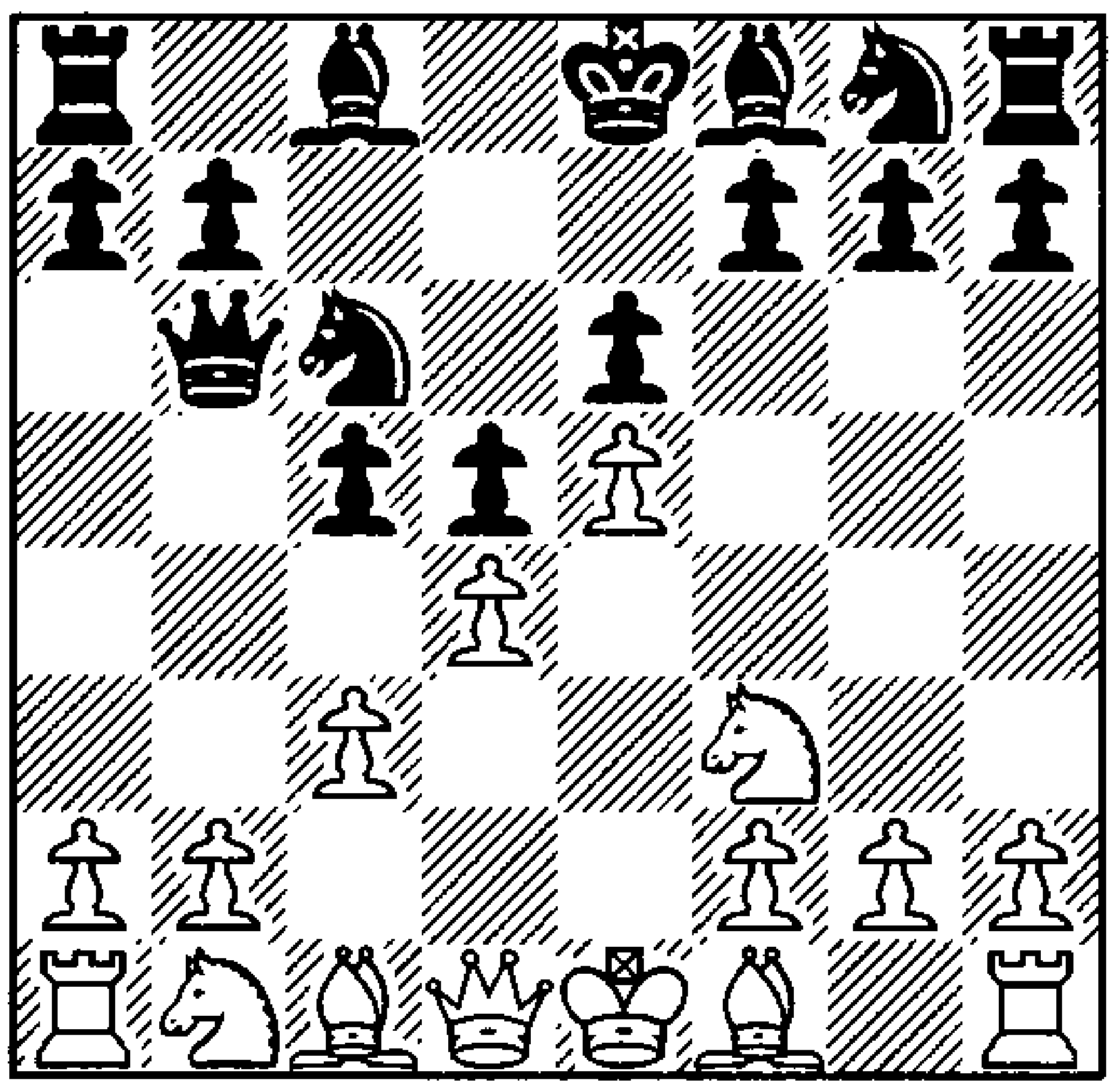
1 e4 c5 2 c3 e6 3 d4 d5 4 e5!?

After the normal move order 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 apart from 4 c3 Nimzowitsch also tried the rare plans 4 ♘f3 cxd4 5 ♕xd4 ♘c6 6 ♕f4, 4 dxc5 ♘c6 5 ♘f3 ♗xc5 6 ♗d3 and 4 ♕g4 cxd4 5 ♘f3, explaining: 'I am not really a gambit player, but in my opinion the sustained policy of restraint (i.e. 3 e5) is worth a pawn.'

In the 1930s 4 ♘f3 ♘c6!? 5 ♗d3!? cxd4 6 0-0 was also played, but this went out of fashion after 6...♗c5 (6...f6!? Alekhine-Euwe, Nottingham 1936) 7 ♘bd2 (7 ♗f4!?) 7...♘ge7 8 a3 (8 ♘b3 ♗b6 9 ♗f4 ♘g6 equalises, Levenfish-Botvinnik, Moscow/Leningrad 9th matchgame 1937) 8...♘g6 9 ♘b3 ♗b6 10 ♖e1 ♗d7 11 g3 f6! with an excellent game for Black (Bondarevsky-Botvinnik, Leningrad/Moscow 1941). **4...♘c6** (4...♗d7 5 ♘f3 ♕b6 with the idea of ...♗b5 is also of topical interest) **5 ♘f3 ♕b6**

Earlier this move was made automatically, but nowadays 5...♘ge7, 5...♘h6 or 5...♗d7 is often played, avoiding the variation 5...♕b6 6 a3. For example: 5...♗d7 6 ♗e2 ♘ge7 7 ♘a3 cxd4 8 cxd4 ♘f5 9 ♘c2 ♘b4 10 0-0! (10 ♘e3 ♘xe3 11 fxe3 ♗e7 12 a3 ♘c6 13 b4 a6 14 ♖b1 ♘a7! 15 a4 ♘c6 16 ♗d2 a5 17 b5 ♘b4 is equal, Spassky-Korchnoi, Belgrade 18th matchgame 1977/78; 10 ♘xb4 ♗xb4+ 11

♗d2 ♕b6!) 10...♘xc2 11 ♕xc2 ♖c8 12 ♕d3 (12 ♕b3 ♕b6!) 12...♕b6 (12...a6!?) 13 a4 (13 ♗d2 ♗b4!) 13...♗b4 14 h4 h6 15 h5 ♘e7 with complicated play (Sveshnikov-Rublevsky, Elista 1994).

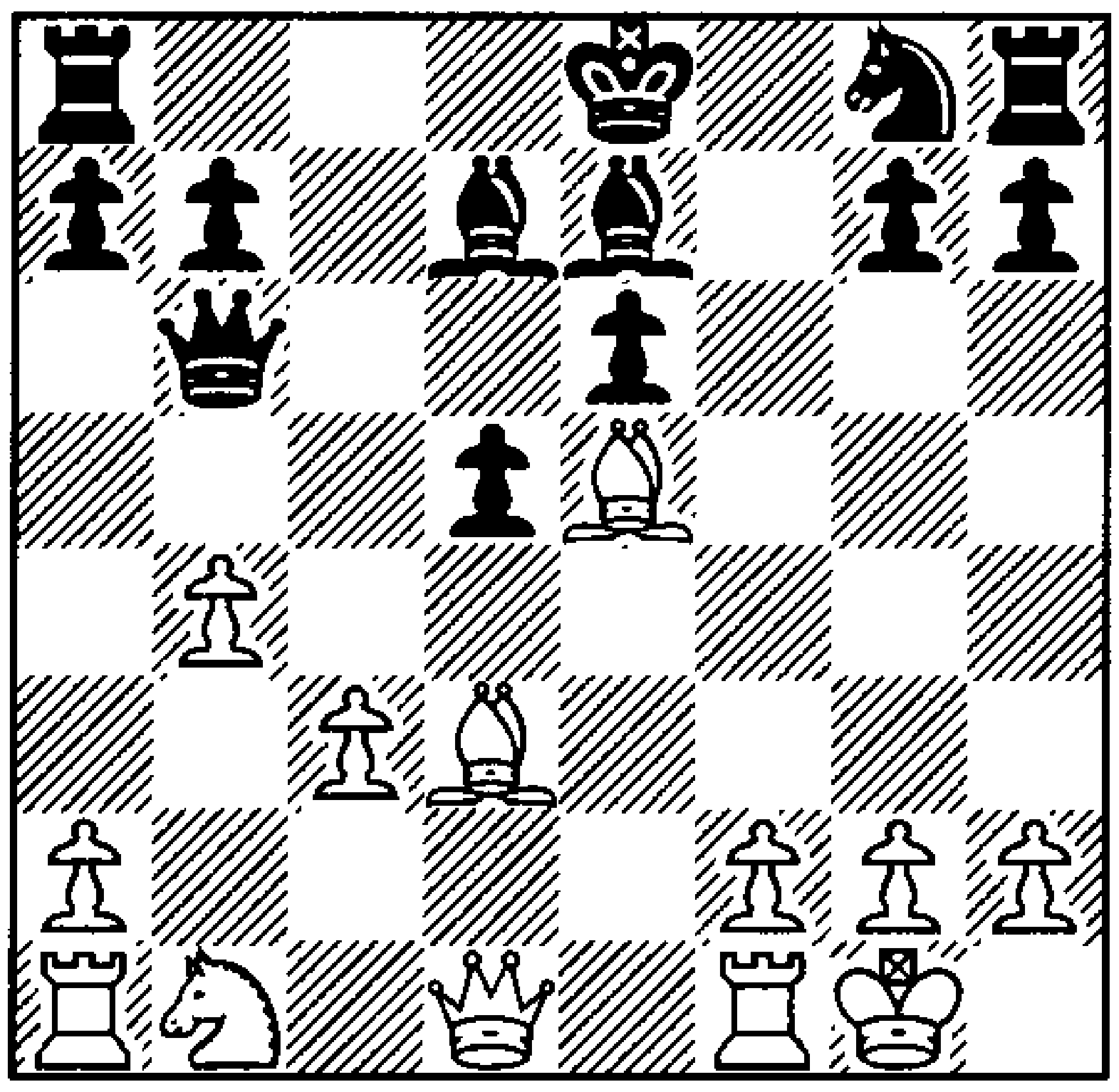


6 ♗d3?!

The first steps of theory. 'More natural would have been 6 ♗e2, for the d4-pawn is the "base", and as such should be protected as thoroughly as possible.' (Nimzowitsch)

6...cxd4!

An accurate reply. 6...♗d7?! 7 dxc5! ♗xc5 8 0-0 favours White, as was shown by the classic game Nimzowitsch-Salwe (Carlsbad 1911): 8...f6?! (8...a5 is better, but not 8...♘ge7? 9 b4 winning) 9 b4! ♗e7 10 ♗f4 fxe5 11 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 12 ♗xe5. A complete piece blockade of the centre:



Analysis diagram

12...♘f6 (bad is 12...♗f6? 13 ♕h5+ g6 14 ♗xg6+ hxg6 15 ♕xg6+ ♔e7 16 ♗xf6+ ♘xf6 17 ♕g7+) 13 ♘d2! 0-0 14 ♘f3! ♗d6 (14...♗b5? 15 ♗d4 ♕a6 16 ♗xb5 ♕xb5 17 ♘g5!) 15 ♕e2 ♖ac8 16 ♗d4 ♕c7 17 ♘e5 ♗e8 18 ♖ae1 ♗xe5 19 ♗xe5 ♕c6 20 ♗d4! ♗d7 21 ♕c2 ♖f7 22 ♖e3! b6 23 ♖g3 ♔h8 24 ♗xh7! e5!? (24...♘xh7 25 ♕g6!) 25 ♗g6 ♖e7 26 ♖e1 ♕d6 27 ♗e3 d4 28 ♗g5 ♖xc3 29 ♖xc3 dxc3 30 ♕xc3... 1-0.

7 cxd4 ♗d7! 8 ♗e2

White is forced to waste a tempo on the defence of the d4-pawn. Steinitz and Maróczy tried 8 ♗c2, but after 8...♘b4 White has no advantage, as I found out for myself back in my childhood, at the schoolchildren's Spartakiad in Alma Ata (1974), playing Black against Gabrilyavichus (where, incidentally, it was also a Sicilian with 2 c3).

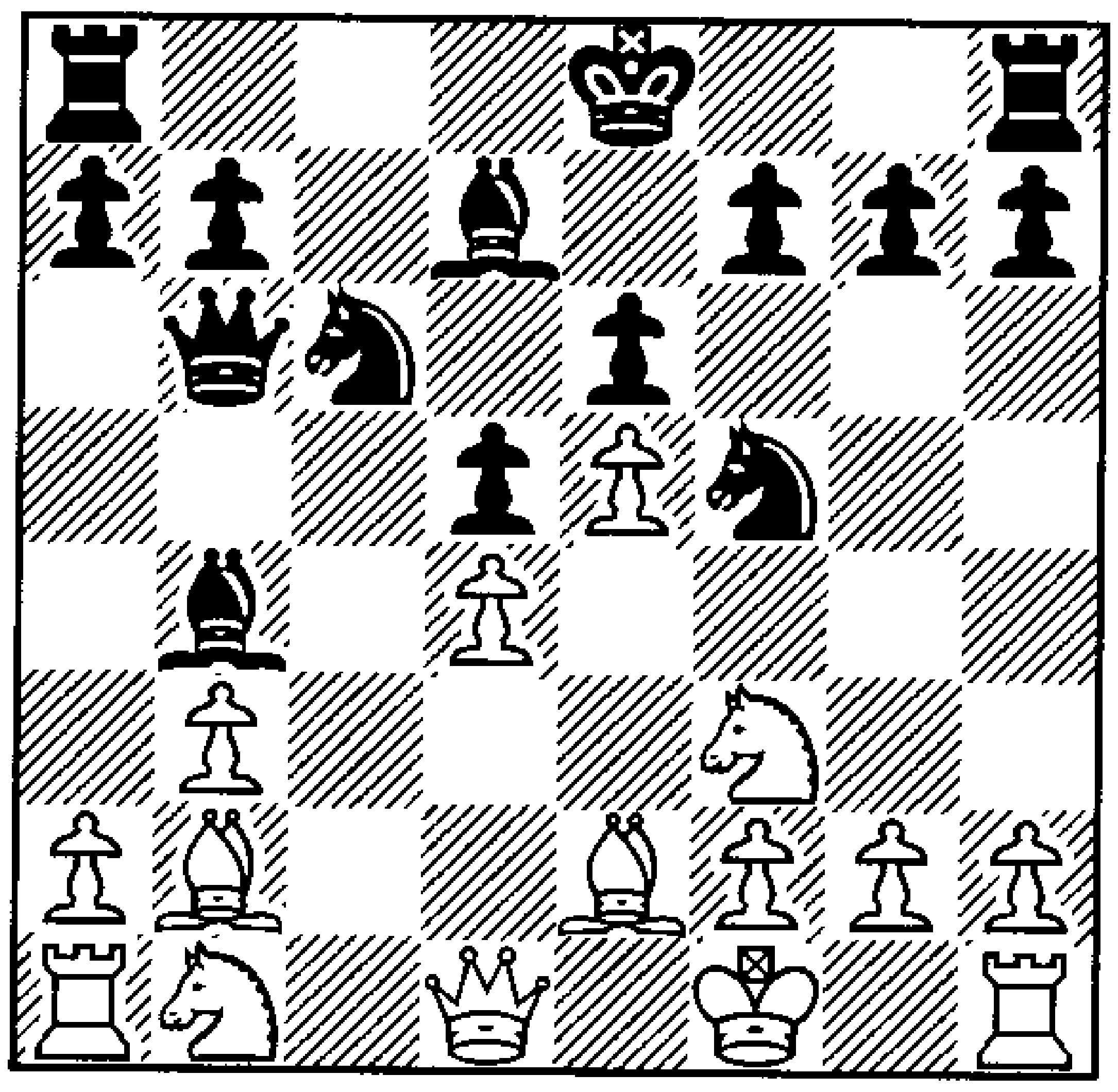
Therefore since the mid-20th century 6 ♗d3 has been played more for the sake of 8 0-0 (the Milner-Barry Gambit) 8...♘xd4 9 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 10 ♘c3, although after the continuation 10...a6! (also 10...♕xe5 11 ♖e1 ♕b8 12 ♘xd5 ♗d6) it is hard for White to develop sufficient initiative to compensate for his material deficit.

8...♘ge7 9 b3?!

Too passive. At the finish of the same tournament, Nimzowitsch played 9 ♘a3 against Duras, and after 9...♘g6?! 10 0-0 ♗e7 11 ♘c2 f6 12 ♗d3 0-0-0 13 b4 (13 ♖e1!?) he retained some advantage. Of course, better is 9...♘f5 10 ♘c2 ♘b4 – compared with the variations considered above with 5...♗d7 Black has an extra tempo (his queen is already at b6) and at least an equal game.

9...♘f5 10 ♗b2 ♗b4+ 11 ♔f1

Because of the pressure on d4, White is deprived of the right to castle. By present-day French measures his position is simply worse: the 'stupid' bishop at b2 plus the threat of ...f7-f6 and the opening of the f-file. However, Nimzowitsch believed in the magical power of the over-protected pawn centre...



11...♗e7

Apparently White would have been satisfied with 11...h5 12 g3 ♖c8 13 ♔g2 g6 14 h3 (Nimzowitsch-Rubinstein, Carlsbad 1911). But Black has no reason to support his knight. According to Nimzowitsch, the most accurate is 11...0-0! 12 ♗d3 f6! 13 ♗xf5 exf5 with the advantage of the two bishops, or 12 g4?! ♘h6 13 ♖g1 f6! 14 exf6 ♖xf6 15 g5 ♖xf3! with a strong initiative: 16 ♗xf3 (*or 16 gxh6 ♖f7 17 ♖xg7+ ♖xg7 18 hxg7 ♕c7 19 ♔g2 ♗e8 – G. K.*) 16...♘f5 17 ♖g4 ♗e8 (17...♖f8!?) 18 ♕e2 (*? – G. K.*) 18...♘cxd4 19 ♖xd4 ♘xd4 20 ♕e5 ♗b5+ 21 ♔g2 ♘f5 22 ♗xd5 (*more tenacious is 22 ♗g4 d4 23 ♗xf5 exf5 – G. K.*) 22...exd5 23 ♕xf5 ♖f8 24 ♕xd5+ ♖f7! 25 ♕d4 ♗c5 and White must resign. And after 11...♗e7 too he has an uneasy position.

12 g3 (12 g4? ♘h4!) **12...a5**

Tarrasch attached an exclamation mark to this move (and also to the previous one), whereas Nimzowitsch gave it a question mark: 'In order to exploit the new "weakness", White's b3-pawn (*again Steinitz's dogmas! – G. K.*). The only pity is that this point is no weakness; he should have gone for the weak king's position.'

Indeed, after 12...0-0 13 ♗d3 (13 ♔g2 f6!) 13...f6! 14 ♗xf5 exf5 Black has a comfortable position – the dream of any French player. For Botvinnik this would already be obvious, like two times two!

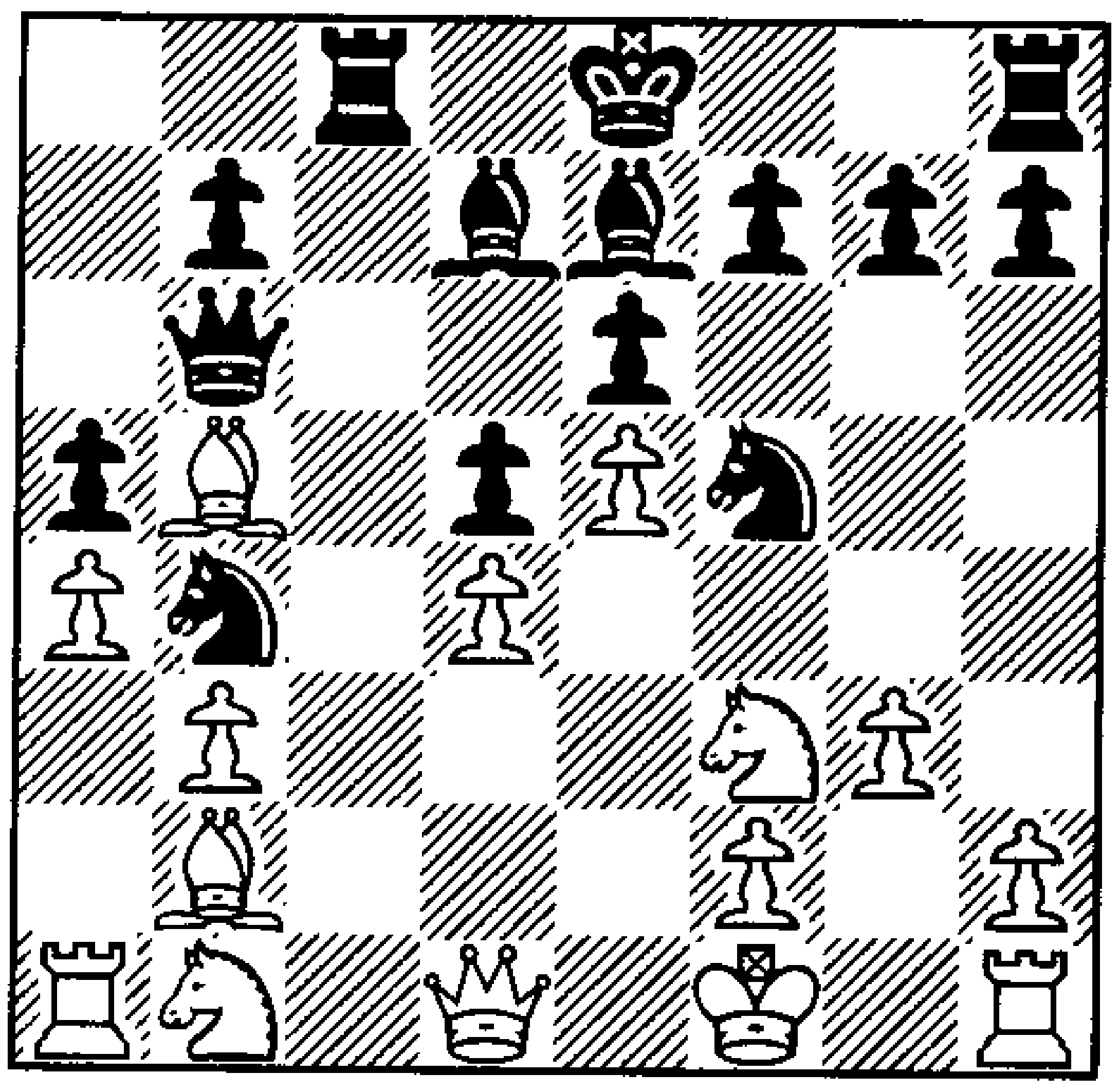
However, the two players were conducting a principled opening dispute, for the time being repeating the old game L. Paulsen-Tarrasch (Nuremberg 1888).

13 a4 ♖c8

The inclusion of ...a7-a5 and a2-a4 does not play any particular role (Black has weakened his b5-square, and White his b4-square), and therefore 13...0-0 and 14...f6! was again logical.

14 ♗b5! ♘b4?!

'14...0-0 was very bad because of 15 ♗d3!, and Black cannot take on d4.' (Tarrasch) He does not need to take – after 15...f6! he is perfectly alright.



15 ♘c3!

An improvement! Paulsen played 15 ♗xd7+?! ♔xd7 16 ♘c3 ♘c6! 17 ♘b5 ♘a7! 18 ♘xa7? (18 ♕d3 ♘xb5 19 axb5 with level chances was essential) 18...♕xa7 19 ♕d3, and after 19...♕a6! 20 ♕xa6 bxa6 21 ♔g2 ♖c2 22 ♗c1 ♖b8 23 ♖b1 ♖c3 24 ♗d2 ♖cxb3 25 ♖xb3 ♖xb3 26 ♗xa5 ♖b2! (but not 26...♖a3? 27 ♖c1!) 27 ♗d2 (27 ♖c1 ♘e3+ and ...♘c4) 27...♗b4! 28 ♗f4 h6 (28...♖a2!?) 29 g4 ♘e7 30 ♖a1 ♘c6 31 ♗c1 ♖c2 Black won an instructive endgame.

15...♘a6?!

A dubious manoeuvre. In his famous *Dreihundert Schachpartien* (1895, 1909), Tarrasch suggested 15...♗xb5+ 16 ♘xb5 ♘c2 'with the threat of ...♘e3+', but Nimzowitsch had prepared a refutation: 17 ♖c1 ♘ce3+ 18 fxe3 ♘xe3+ 19 ♔e2 ♘xd1 20 ♖xc8+ ♔d7 21

♖xh8 ♘xb2 22 ♖c1 winning. On noticing this, Black diverged, but better was 15...♗xb5+ 16 ♘xb5 0-0! (instead of 16...♘c2?) 17 ♖c1 (17 ♔g2? ♘c2) 17...♖c6 18 ♔g2 ♖fc8 19 ♖e1 ♘a2 (19...♘a6 is unclear) 20 ♖a1 ♘b4, immediately forcing a draw.

One of White's problems is the 'stupidity' of his bishop at b2 and, despite all Nimzowitsch's optimism, he has nothing in particular. It can rather be said that in this game the old dogma was inferior to the new dogma...

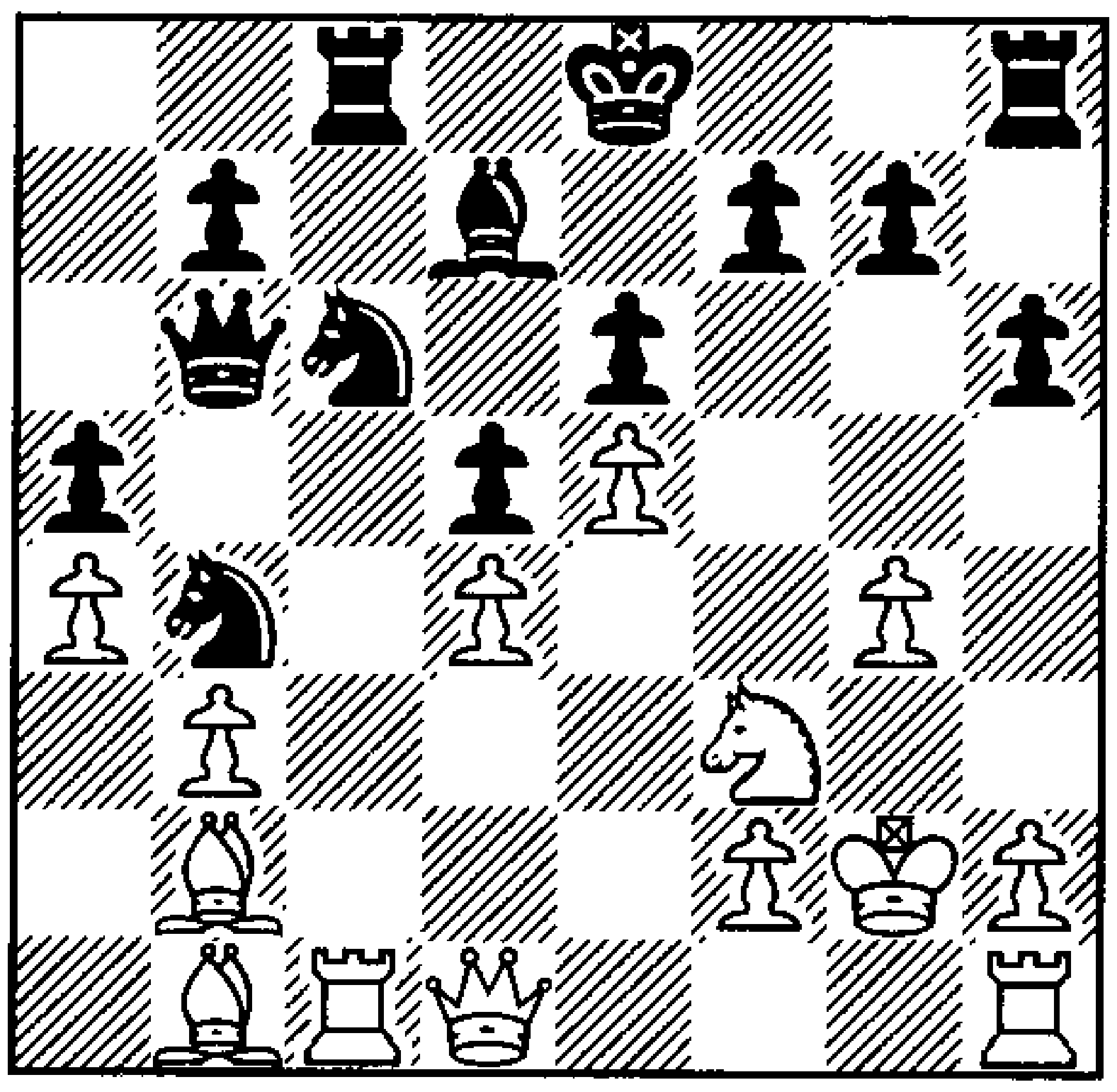
16 ♔g2 ♘c7 17 ♗e2! (retaining the 'good' bishop) **17...♗b4**

Here after 17...0-0 18 ♗d3 f6 White would now have had time to regroup successfully: 19 ♘e2 ♗e8 20 exf6 ♗xf6 21 ♗a3 with some advantage.

18 ♘a2 ♘a6 19 ♗d3 ♘e7 20 ♖c1 ♘c6 21 ♘xb4 ♘axb4 22 ♗b1

Over the last 10 moves White has made colossal progress: he has hidden his king at g2, overcome his lag in development and preserved his light-squared bishop from exchange. Whereas Black has played unconvincingly: he has allowed the exchange of his 'good' dark-squared bishop and only gained the b4-square, which in the given situation does not produce anything.

22...h6 23 g4



'White opens an attack against the black king's wing which is cramped by the e5-pawn. 23 g4 is to make castling appear unhealthy, but 23 ♖c3 and ♖e3 was also good, perhaps even better.' (Nimzowitsch) Or 23 ♖e1!? and ♖e3. Another idea is 23 h4!? (the position of the pawn at h5 together with ♘h4 promises a favourable endgame). In any case White's chances are somewhat better, but for the moment Black is solidly placed.

23...♘e7

This has to be played. Someone recommended 23...♔e7?! 24 ♕d2 ♖cf8 'and then ...f7-f6.' But here I have great doubts: what to do with the king on e7?! After 25 ♖c5 f6 26 ♖hc1 White has an obvious advantage.

Also given was the variation 23...♕d8?! 24 ♕d2 0-0 25 g5 hxg5 26 ♘xg5, which I considered necessary to continue: 26...f6 (26...f5 27 ♖g1 with an attack) 27 ♘h7! ♖f7 28 exf6 gxf6 29 ♖hg1!, and 29...♖xh7? fails to 30 ♔h1+ ♖g7 (or 30...♔h8 31 ♗xh7 ♔xh7 32 ♕e3 e5 33 ♕g3) 31 ♕h6 ♕f8 32 ♖xg7+ ♕xg7 33 ♖g1 and wins, while after 29...f5 30 ♘g5 ♖g7 31 ♔h1 Black has a bad position.

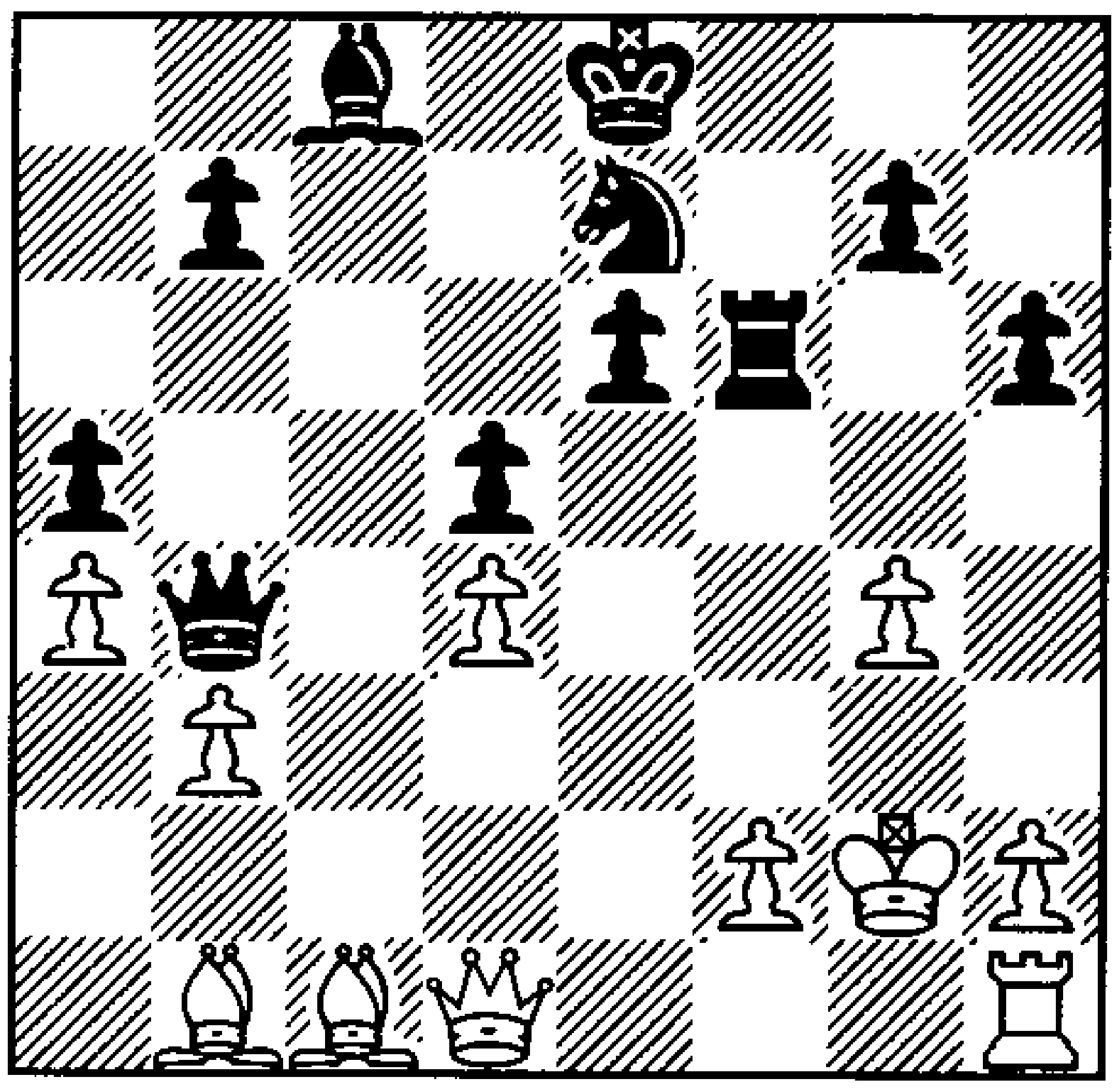
24 ♖xc8+ ♗xc8 25 ♘e1 (25 ♕d2!?) **25...♖f8!**

Tarrasch correctly realised that the king should be left at g8 and counterplay created by ...f7-f6.

26 ♘d3 f6 27 ♘xb4 ♕xb4 28 exf6

A somewhat dubious idea. Nimzowitsch generally praised his own moves, but it seems to me that 28 ♖e1!? or perhaps 28 ♕c2 came into consideration.

28...♖xf6 29 ♗c1?!



The maker of this move attached an exclamation mark to it : 'White gets a direct attack. Note the bishop which has been roused to activity.' Although in the light of what follows, 29 ♖e1 ♘g6 30 ♗xg6+ ♖xg6 31 h3 was more accurate.

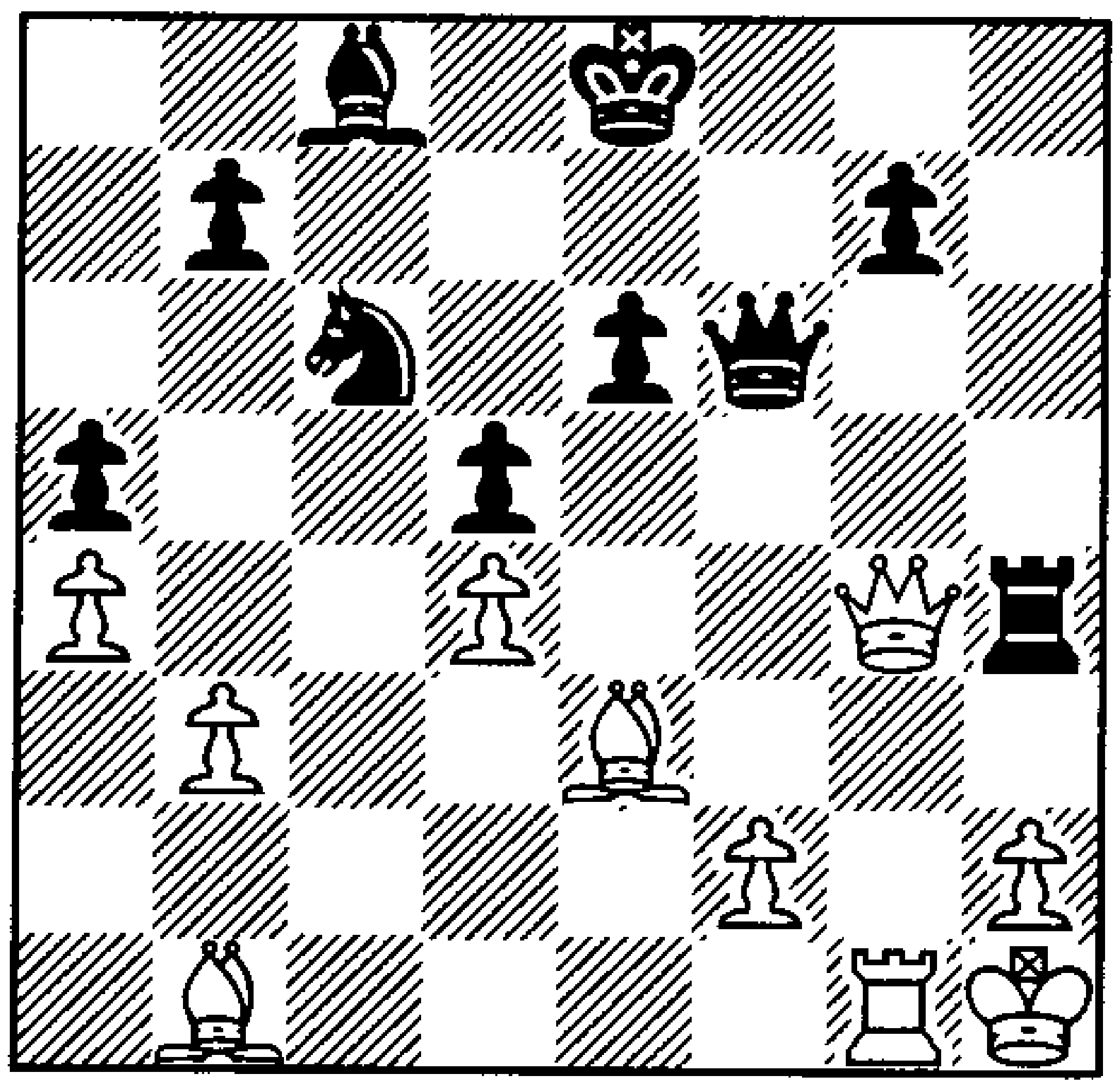
29...♘c6?

A serious time-trouble mistake. The commentators, who considered this to be a model instructional game, did not notice 29...e5! (the computer suggests this instantly). It is a pity that Tarrasch missed his chance: I should have liked to see what Nimzowitsch would have done in this case. Black is threatening ...e5-e4, shutting out the bishop at b1, 31 dxe5? ♗xg4 is bad, and 30 g5 ♖f7 is unclear. In a word, the plan with 29 ♗c1 was dubious.

30 g5! (now White does indeed have an attack) **30...hxg5 31 ♗xg5 ♖f8 32 ♗e3 ♕e7**

Good or bad, Black had to run with his king as soon as possible – 32...♔d8!? Although, of course, here too after 33 ♕g4 ♘e7 34 ♖c1 White has the initiative and freedom for his two bishops.

33 ♕g4 ♕f6 34 ♖g1! (a strong manoeuvre together with ♔h1) **34...♖h8** (apparently this is also a mistake, but already in a difficult position: 34...♘e7 35 ♔h1 ♖f7 36 ♕h5 ♔d7 37 ♗d3 etc.) **35 ♔h1 ♖h4?**

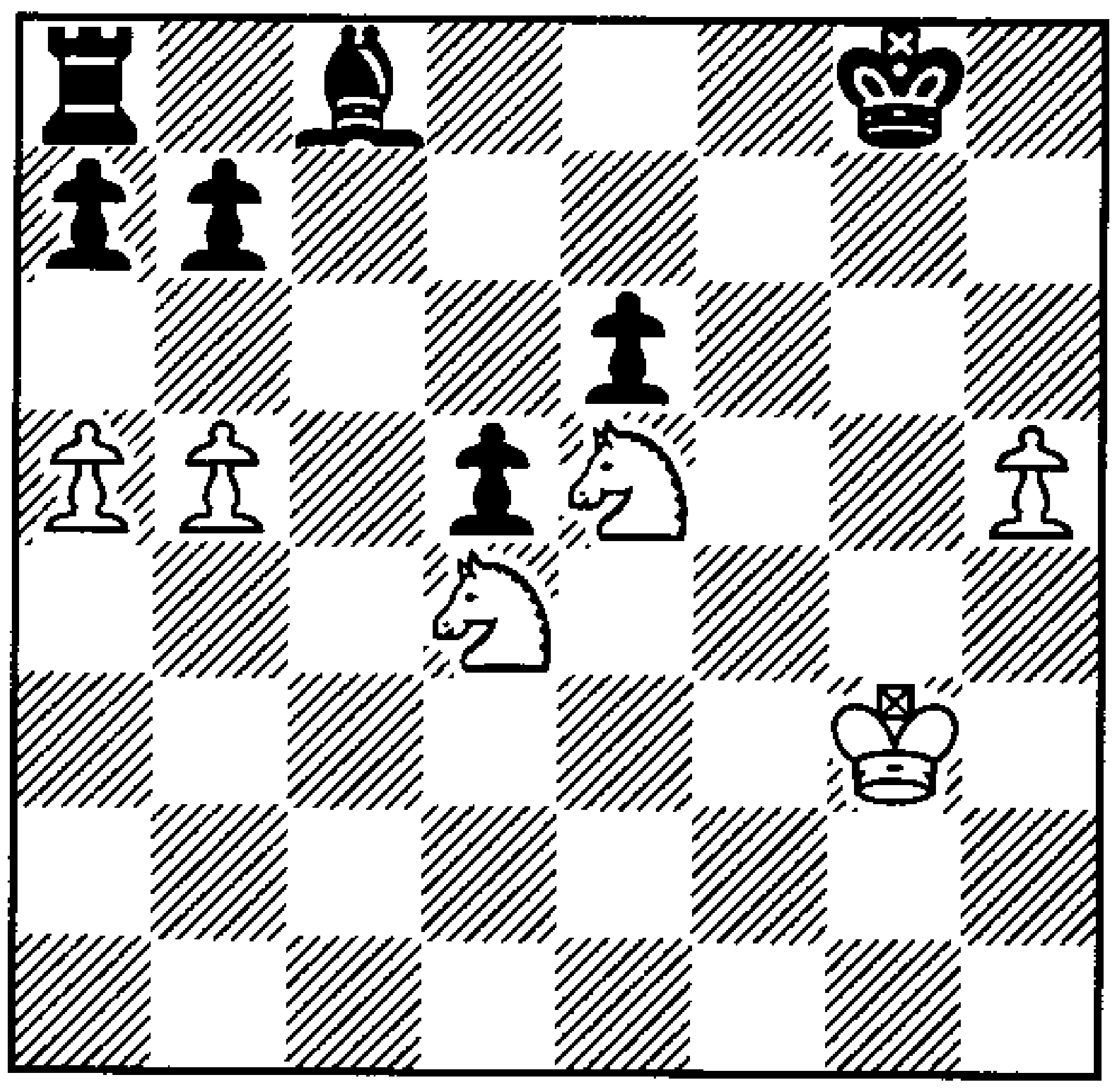


The final error. After 35...♔f8 36 ♗d3 ♗d7 White would still have had to battle for his win.

36 ♕g3 (this is the end: both ♗g5 and ♕xg7 are threatened) **36...♖xd4!?** (desperation) **37 ♗xd4 ♘xd4 38 ♕xg7 ♕f3+ 39 ♕g2 ♕xg2+ 40 ♖xg2 ♘xb3 41 h4 1-0**

This game is a vivid demonstration of how new views win their place under the sun. After winning one game convincingly as Black against Paulsen, Tarrasch stagnated somewhat and rested on his laurels. Whereas Nimzowitsch upheld his new views, and it has to be said the variation with 3 e5 still remains at the centre of heated discussions: some dispute it with White, and others with Black.

In the aforementioned article Nimzowitsch expressed his most cherished, 'truly modern' view: yes, for creating a centre it is pawns that are the most suitable (in view of their stability), but they can well be replaced by pieces that have moved to the centre! Occupation of the centre can be replaced by piece pressure on the centre!' Later in his main book *My System* (1929) and other theoretical works Nimzowitsch began using concepts such as the flexible centre, the security of the pawn chain, the weakness of a complex of squares of a particular colour, prophylaxis, manoeuvring, restraint and, finally, blockade.



(Nimzowitsch's position)

This is an instructional position from Nimzowitsch's book, which evokes the above game with Salwe (c.f. the diagram on page

277. 'Eloquent, wouldn't you agree? White is the exchange and a pawn down in the endgame, but his position is better thanks to the blockading knights,' writes Tal, and he remembers another two classic examples on the theme of blockade: Reshevsky-Petrosian (Zürich candidates 1953) and Tal-Petrosian (25th USSR Championship, Riga 1958). We will return to these games in the second volume.

The ideas listed lay at the basis of Nimzowitsch's most grandiose invention – the Nimzo-Indian Defence and the Queen's Indian Defence. The system 1 d4 ♘f6 and 2...e6 – without an early ...d7-d5, with piece pressure on the centre (or, more precisely, on the e4-square that has been weakened by d2-d4) was initially called by its author the 'Modern Queen's Gambit'. It was discovered and thoroughly analysed by Nimzowitsch in 1911-1912, tested in training games in the summer of 1913 and was soon employed for the first time in a serious competition – the All-Russian master tournament.

Game 93
B.Gregori-A.Nimzowitsch
St Petersburg 1913/14
Queen's Pawn Opening A46

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 ♗g5

'Of special interest historically as being the first game in which what has been called the 'Ideal Queen's Gambit' was played, where Black forgoes altogether the occupation of the centre by his pawns. In answer to 3 c4 I had intended 3...b6. The point d5 is to remain permanently unoccupied.' (Nimzowitsch)

In the 1950s 3 ♗g5 was a favourite weapon of Petrosian. A comparatively harmless deviation from the Queen's Indian was 3 ♗f4 c5 4 c3 (Rubinstein-Nimzowitsch, St Petersburg 1914).

3...h6

3...c5 4 e3 b6? is inaccurate because of 5 d5! (Petrosian's discovery). We will examine 3...d5 (Spassky-Petrosian, Moscow 7th match-game 1966) in the second volume.

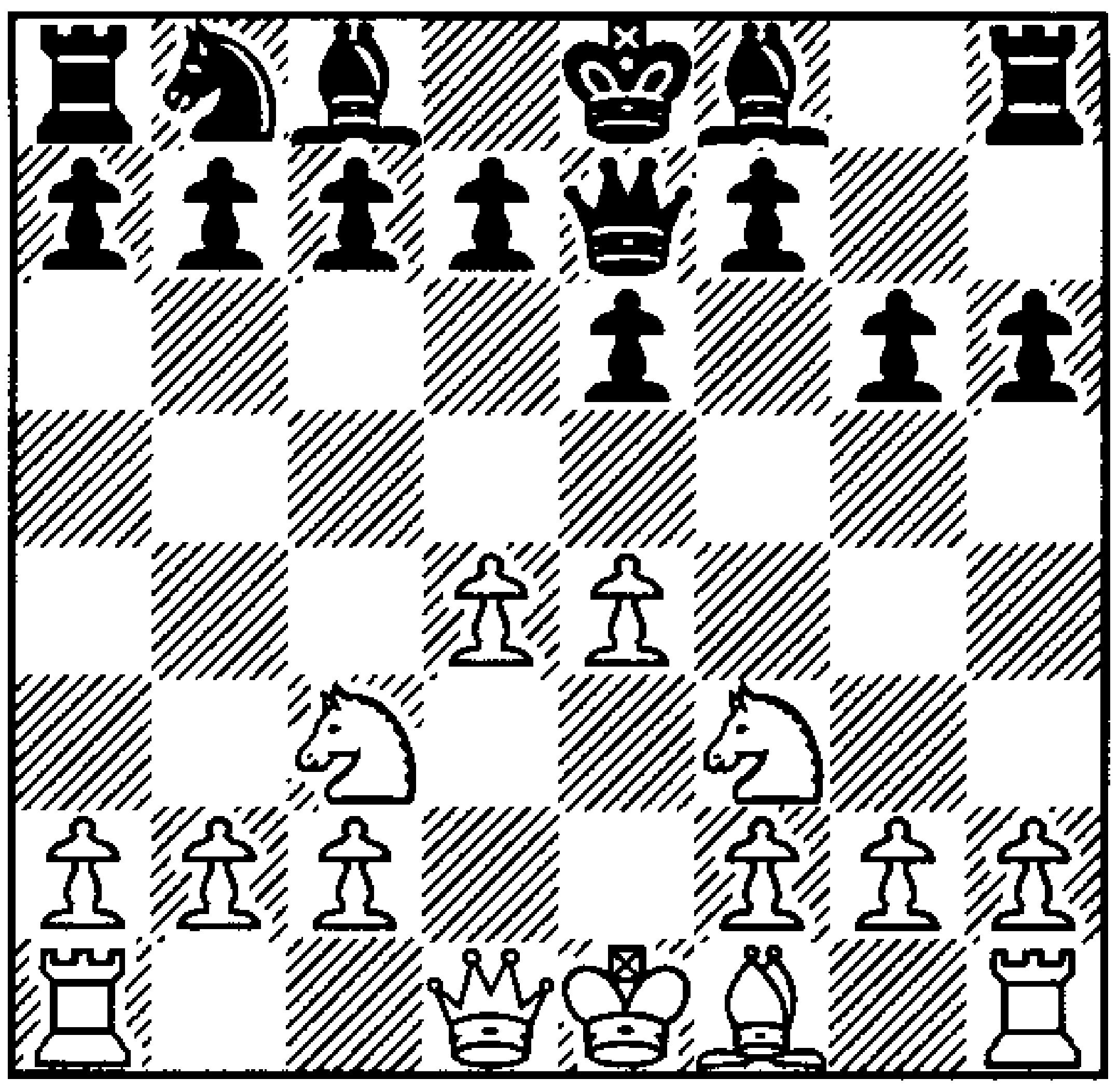
4 ♗xf6

After 4 ♗h4 Alekhine, who borrowed this system from Nimzowitsch, suggested 4...d5, but he himself played 4...b6 5 e3 ♗b7 6 ♗d3 c5 7 0-0 ♗e7 8 ♘bd2 d6 9 ♕e2 ♘bd7 10 ♖ad1 0-0 11 c3 ♕c7 12 ♖fe1 ♖fe8 with a slightly inferior position for Black (Janowski-Alekhine, Mannheim 1914). More energetic is 4...c5! 5 e3 cxd4 6 exd4 ♗e7 7 ♗d3 0-0 8 c3 b6 9 ♕e2 ♗b7 10 ♘bd2 ♘c6 11 ♗xf6!? (11 0-0 ♘d5 equalises) 11...♗xf6 12 0-0-0 g6! 13 h4 ♗g7 14 ♔b1 ♘e7! etc. (I. Sokolov-Karpov, Linares 1995).

4...♕xf6 5 e4 g6!?

5...d6 6 ♘c3 (or 6 c3 g6) 6...♘d7 is now in vogue, whereas Karpov has tried the sharp 6...g5!? a couple of times.

6 ♘c3 (the alternative is 6 ♗d3, ♘bd2 and c2-c3) **6...♕e7!** (avoiding the opening of the position after e4-e5)



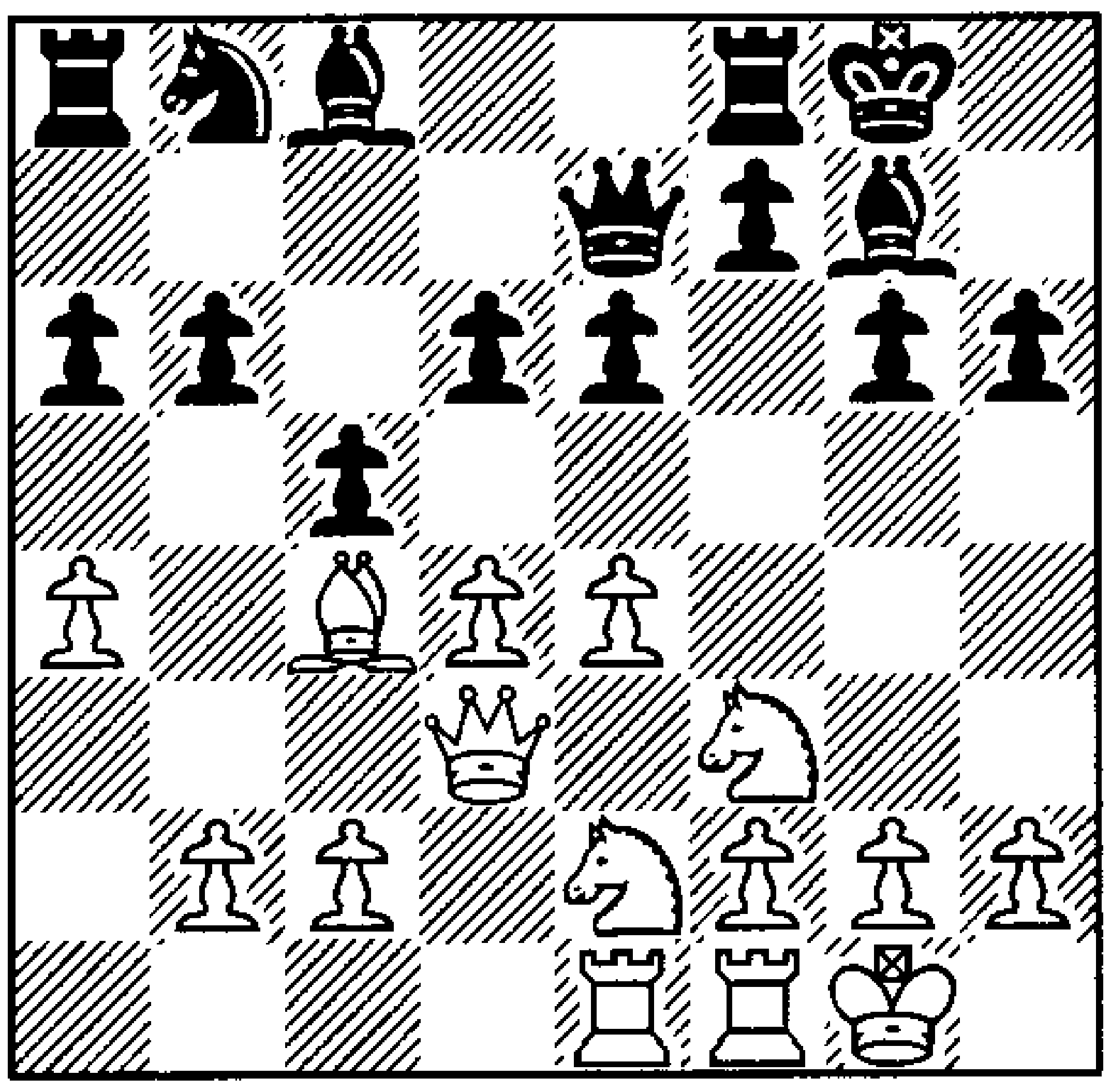
7 ♗c4

Or 7 ♗d3 d6 8 ♕e2 ♗g7 9 e5 d5 with equal chances (Tselikov-Alekhine, Moscow 1915). 7 ♕d2 d6 8 0-0-0 is more lively, for example: 8...a6 9 h4 ♗g7 10 g3 b5 with sharp play (Korchnoi-Karpov, Moscow 19th match-game 1974).

7...♗g7 8 0-0 d6 9 ♕d3 0-0 10 ♖ae1 a6 11 a4 b6 12 ♘e2 (12 e5 d5!; 12 d5 e5!) **12...c5!**

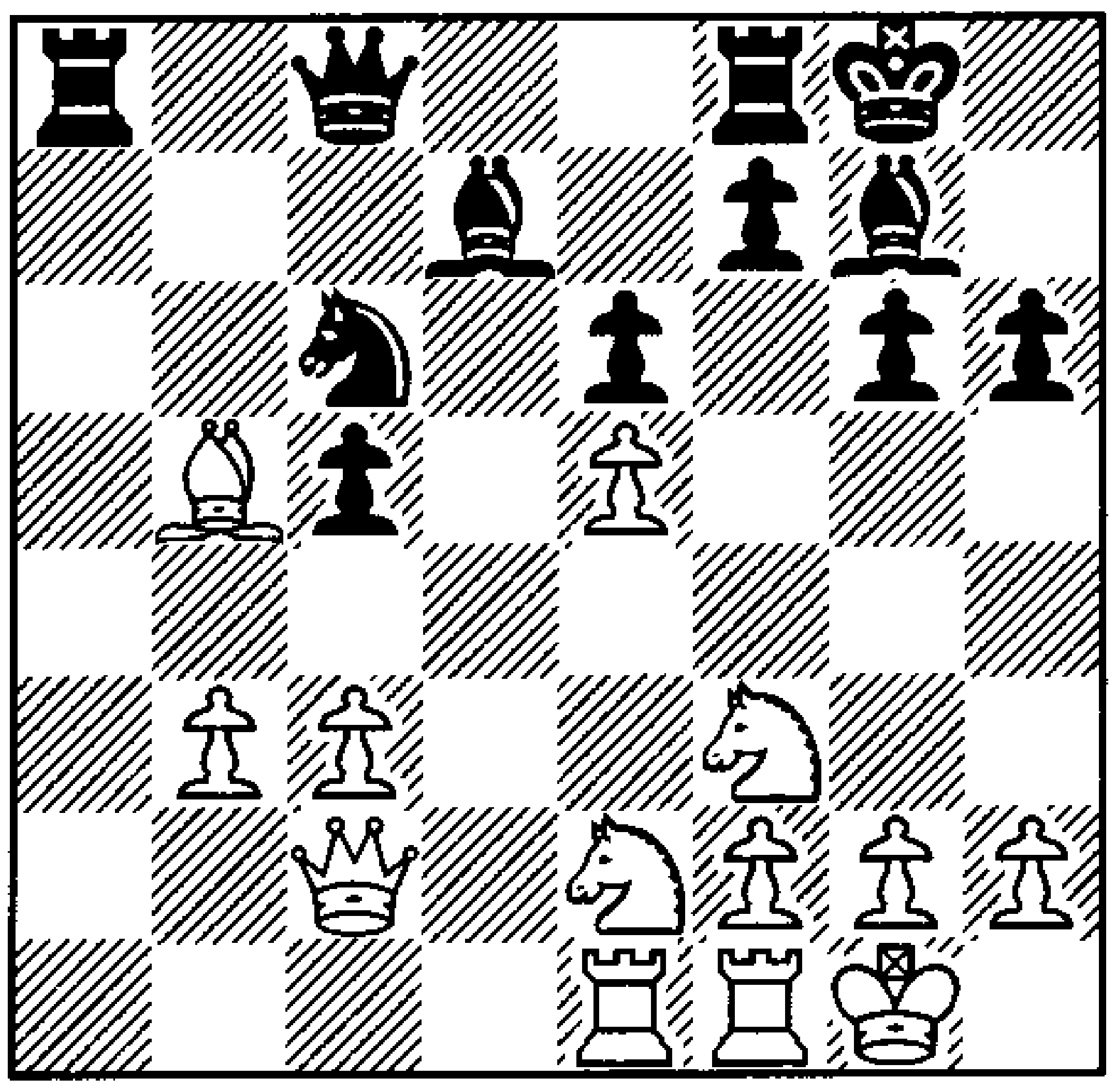
'A strategical device which the hypermodernist may care to note, makes its appearance here. I mean the continuity of an attack directed against a pawn mass. This is to be understood thus: the threatened advance must first have its sting drawn (in this game this was done by 6...♕e7). It is only when this has happened that we may regard the mass as semi-mobile, and attack it; for only those objects which have been made immobile should be chosen as a target.' (Nimzowitsch)

Note that both this game, and the aforementioned Janowski-Alekhine game, are, with reversed colours, unusual prototypes of the Réti Opening!



13 c3 ♗d7 14 b3 (14 ♘d2!? ♗xa4 15 f4 Nimzowitsch) **14...♕e8 15 ♕c2 b5 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♗d3 ♕c8! 18 dxc5 dxc5 19 e5 ♘c6 20 ♗xb5?!**

After 20 ♘g3 b4 Black's two bishops would sooner or later have had their say.



20...♘xe5 21 ♘xe5 ♗xb5 22 ♘f3 ♕b7 23 ♘d2 ♗c6 24 f3 ♖fb8 25 ♘g3 ♕a7 26 ♖f2 ♗d5 27 ♔f1 ♕a2 28 ♕xa2 ♖xa2 29 c4 ♗d4 30 ♖fe2 ♗c6 31 ♖d1 ♖b2 32 ♖c1 h5 33 ♔e1 ♖a8 and Black won.

In the following famous game the opening was played rather weakly, which, however, is quite excusable: it was one of the first experiences of the Queen's Indian Defence being employed.

Game 94

F.Sämisch-A.Nimzowitsch

Copenhagen 1923

Queen's Indian Defence E06

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6!?

A challenge to the established rules: in the traditions of the classical school was if not 1...d5, then at least 3...d5.

4 g3

The Rubinstein Variation. The game Bernstein-Nimzowitsch (St Petersburg 1914) went 4 ♘c3 ♗b7 5 e3 ♗b4 6 ♕b3 ♕e7 (6...c5 or 6...a5 is better) 7 a3 ♗xc3+ 8 ♕xc3 d6 9 b4 ♘bd7 10 ♗b2 a5 (Nimzowitsch recommended 10...♘e4! and ...f7-f5) 11 ♗e2 axb4 12 axb4 ♖xa1+ 13 ♗xa1 0-0 14 0-0 ♘e4 15 ♕c2 f5 16 ♘d2 ♘xd2 (16...c5!?) 17 ♕xd2 ♖a8 with a fighting draw on the 50th move.

This game became a prototype of a fashionable position from the 'Classical Variation' of the Nimzo-Indian Defence: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♕c2 0-0 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 ♕xc3 b6 7 ♘f3 ♗b7 8 e3 d6 9 b4 ♘bd7 10 ♗b2, and here apart from 10...♕e7 11 ♗e2! (11 ♗d3 c5! Kasparov-Gligoric, Lucerne Olympiad 1982) 11...♘e4 12 ♕c2 f5 13 0-0 ♘df6 14 ♖ad1 ♖ae8 15 ♘d2 ♘xd2 16 ♕xd2 ♘e4 17 ♕c1! with advantage to White (Miles-Andersson, Wijk aan Zee 1981), 10...c5, 10...a5 or the immediate 10...♘e4 (Kramnik-Karpov, Dos Hermanas 1997) are possible, although everywhere, thanks to his two bishops, White retains a strategic initiative.

4...♗b7

The variation with 4...♗a6!? also comes from Nimzowitsch and was, incidentally, the main theoretical trend at the end of the 20th century!

5 ♗g2 ♗e7 6 ♘c3 (or 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♘c3) **6...0-0**

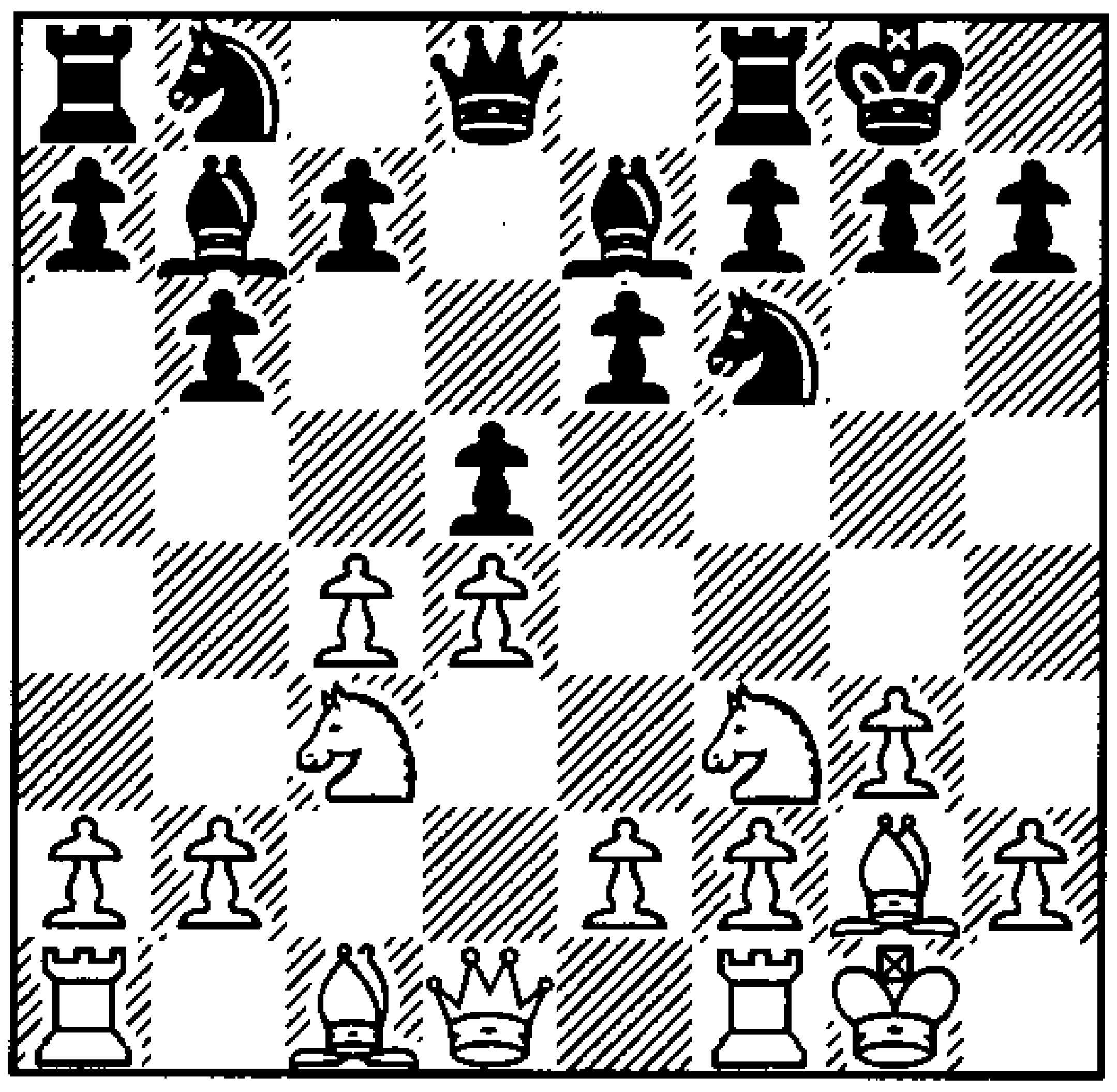
The main move is 6...♘e4! In Euwe-Alekhine (Holland 21st matchgame 1937) Black tried this even with the loss of a tempo: 5...♗b4+ 6 ♗d2 ♗e7 7 ♘c3 ♘e4 8 0-0 0-0 9 d5 ♘xd2 10 ♕xd2 ♗f6 11 ♖ad1 d6 etc.

7 0-0

7 ♕c2! is more energetic, as in the games Ravinsky-Botvinnik (Leningrad 1930), Korchnoi-Karpov (Moscow 5th matchgame 1974) and Karpov-Spassky (Riga 1975).

7...d5

Nevertheless Nimzowitsch is still drawn towards the Queen's Gambit ... The first to categorically declare that only 7...♘e4! is in the spirit of the position was Botvinnik – and he successfully defended his thesis against none other than Alekhine (AVRO Tournament, Holland 1938).



8 ♘e5

As is shown by modern praxis, beginning with the match game Korchnoi-Spassky (Belgrade 17th matchgame 1977/78), 8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♕c2 ♘a6 10 ♖d1 is also good for White.

8...c6?!

The fashion at the end of the 20th century was for 8...♘a6. Now the position on the board is a favourable variation for White of the Catalan Opening.

9 cxd5?!

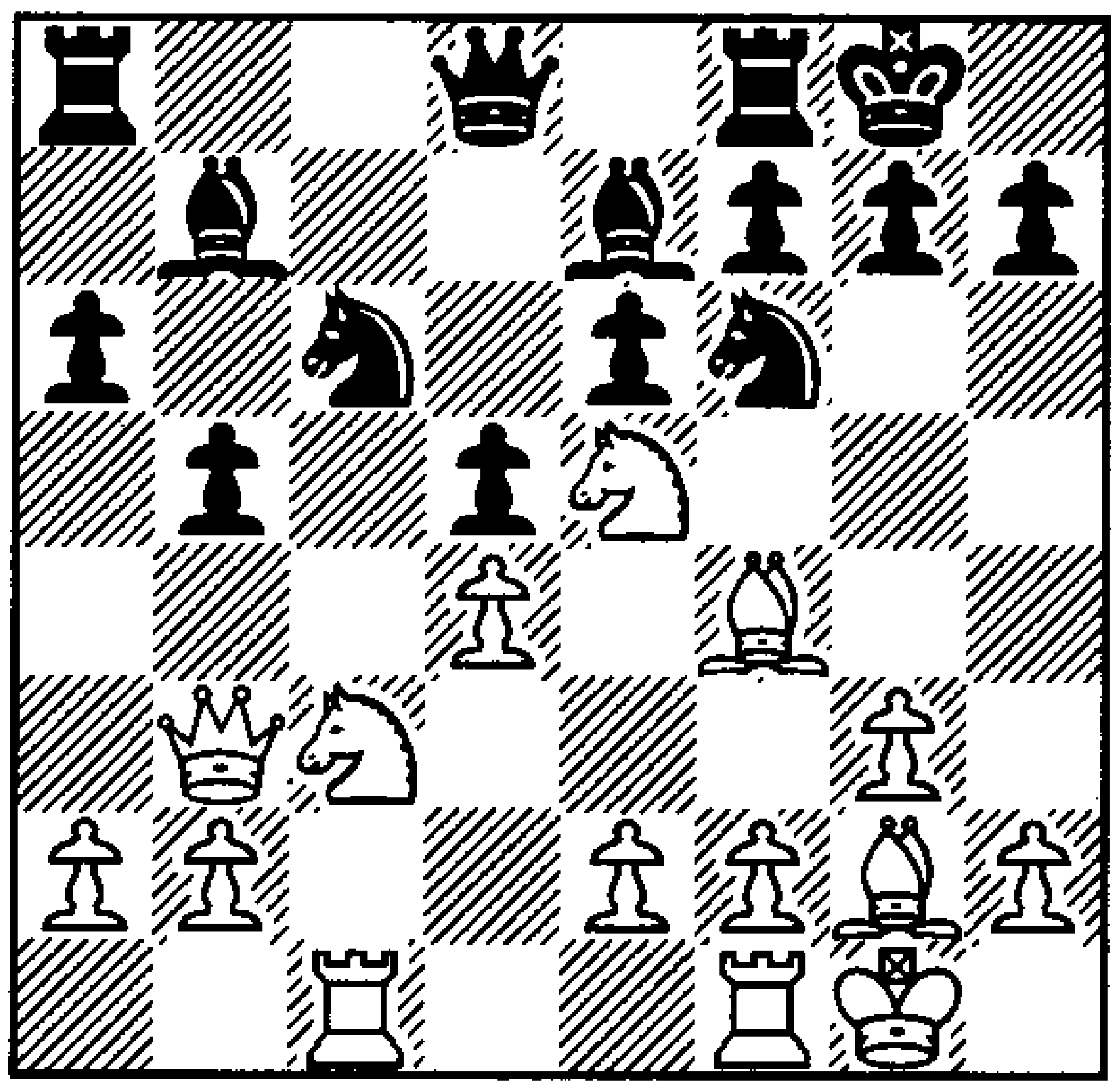
9 e4! is much stronger, for example: 9...dxc4 10 ♘xc4 ♗a6 11 b3 b5 12 ♘e3 b4 13 ♘e2 ♗xe2 (13...♘bd7 14 ♗b2) 14 ♕xe2 ♕xd4 15 ♗b2 with excellent play for the pawn (Smyslov-Guimard, Groningen 1946), or 9...♘bd7 10 ♘xc6!? (10 exd5 cxd5 11 cxd5 ♘xe5 12 d6 ♘c6! is unclear) 10...♗xc6 11 exd5 exd5 (11...♗b7?! 12 d6) 12 cxd5 ♗b7 13 d6 ♗xg2 14 dxe7 ♕xe7 15 ♔xg2, by contrast, with an extra pawn.

9...cxd5 10 ♗f4 (10 ♗g5 ♘bd7 11 ♖e1 ♘xe5 12 dxe5 ♘d7 is level) **10...a6** (with the idea of ...b6-b5 and ...♘c6-a5-c4) **11 ♖c1 b5 12 ♕b3**

12 a3!? is interesting – 12...♘c6? 13 ♘xd5!, while if 12...♘bd7, then 13 ♘d3 with complicated, unclear play: 13...♕b6 14 e3 ♖fc8 15 b4 ♖c4 16 ♘c5 a5 17 ♕b3 etc.

12...♘c6?!

'The ghost! With noiseless steps he presses on towards c4.' (Nimzowitsch) But, 12...♘bd7!? 13 ♘a4 ♖c8 14 ♘d3 ♘e4 15 f3 ♗c6 was evidently more solid.. Here one of the basic problems of Nimzowitsch the player is revealed: carried away by his strategic ideas, he often ignored tactics!



13 ♘xc6?!

For some reason the strong tactical blow 13 ♘xd5!, opening the position to White's advantage, went unnoticed: 13...♘xd4 14 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 15 ♕e3 ♗xg2 16 ♔xg2 ♕b7+

17 f3 ♘f5 (17...♖fd8?! 18 ♖fd1 ♘f5 19 ♕f2 ♘d5 20 ♗d2 f6 21 ♘d3) 18 ♕f2 ♘h5 (or 18...♘d5 19 ♗d2) 19 ♗d2 ♕d5 20 ♗c3 b4 21 e4 ♕b5 22 a4!? ♕xa4 23 ♗d2 ♘e7 24 ♕c5, and Black does not have clear equality. I don't know, but perhaps this was too complicated for those times?

13...♗xc6

'Sämisch sacrifices two tempi (exchange of the tempo-eating knight at e5 for the knight which is almost undeveloped) merely to be rid of the ghost.' (Nimzowitsch)

14 h3?! ♕d7 15 ♔h2?! (Sämisch does not seem to know what to do, and he marks time) **15...♘h5!**

'I could have supplied him with yet a second ghost by 15...♕b7 and ...♘d7-b6-c4, but I wished to turn my attention to the kingside.' (Nimzowitsch)

16 ♗d2 f5 (White's position is already worse) **17 ♕d1?**

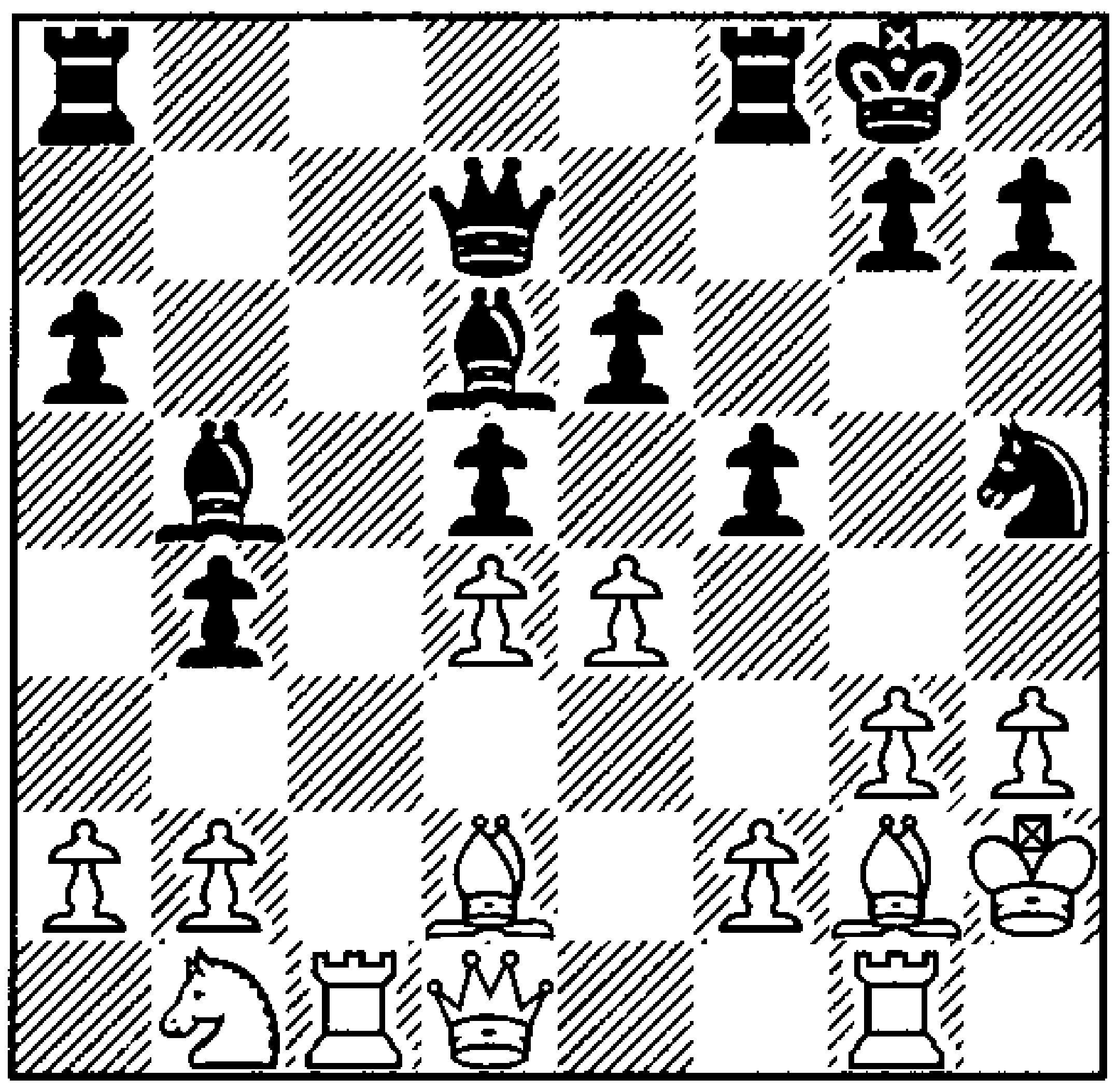
Although White has lost a lot of time, after 17 ♘b1 he could still have put up a fight, for example: 17...a5 (17...♘f6 18 ♗b4) 18 ♖c2 f4 19 g4 ♗d6 20 ♗f3 ♘f6 21 ♖fc1 ♖fc8.

17...b4 18 ♘b1 ♗b5 19 ♖g1

Or 19 ♕e1 a5 20 a3 ♖ab8. 'One senses how White is shrivelling.' (Nimzowitsch)

19...♗d6 20 e4?!

A desperate chance, the only one to try and escape from the vice.



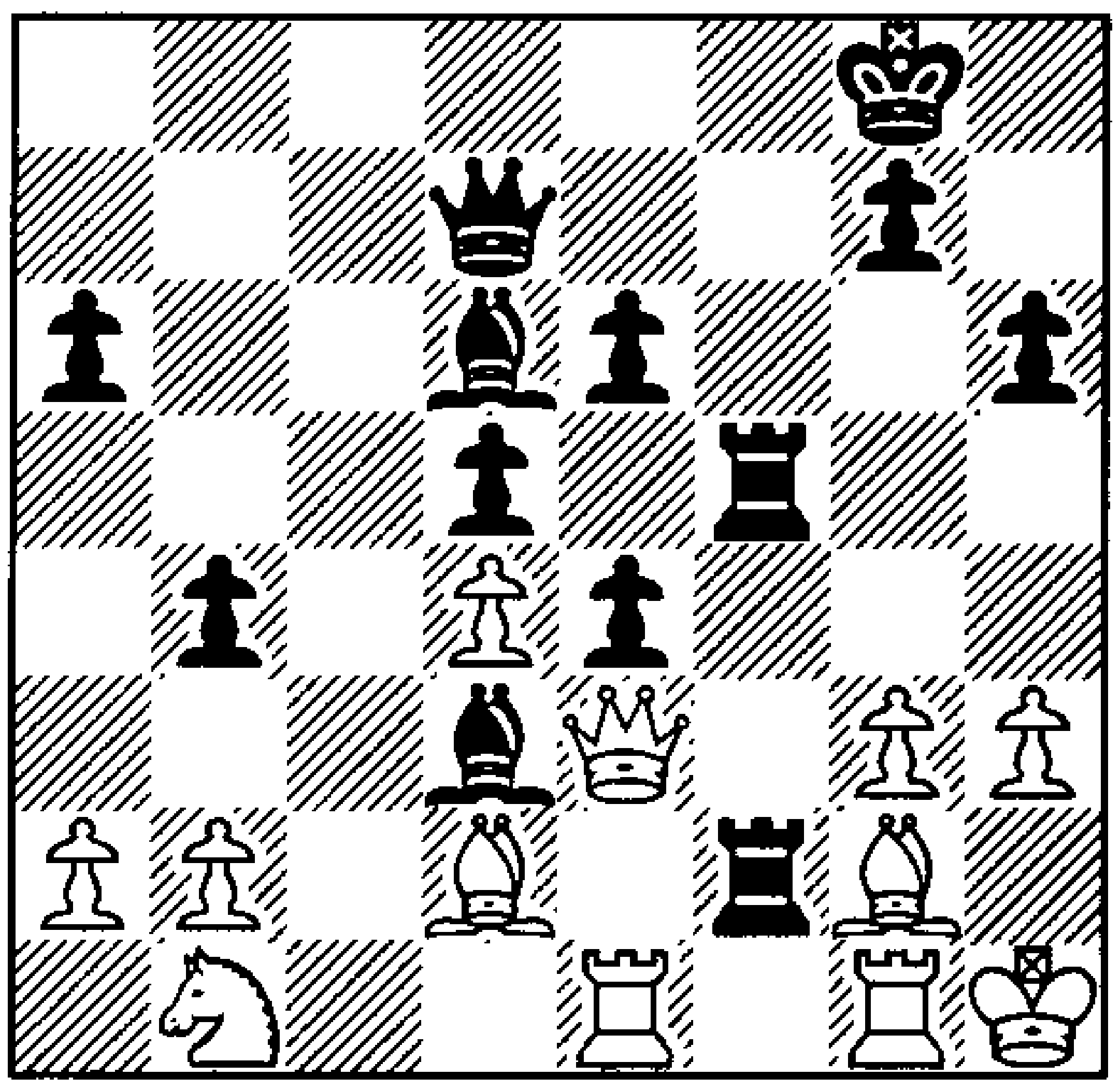
20...fxe4!

An absolutely correct piece sacrifice, leading to the complete paralysis of White's army. 'He is unable to disentangle his pieces.' (Nimzowitsch)

21 ♕xh5 ♖xf2 22 ♕g5 (22 a3 a5) **22...♖af8 23 ♔h1 ♖8f5 24 ♕e3 ♗d3**

Black is playing for zugzwang, but it is amusing (and also not pointed out by anyone) that it was also possible simply to win the queen: 24...♖e2! 25 ♕b3 ♗a4 26 ♖c8+ ♖f8.

25 ♖ce1 h6! 0-1



Brilliant! White resigns – he has no moves: if 26 ♔h2 or 26 g4, then 26...♖5f3!

'This game,' wrote Nimzowitsch, 'called in Denmark the "immortal zugzwang game", is just as typical of our time as was the "immortal sacrificial game" of Anderssen's time. Now we sacrifice for the sake of prophylaxis, or to set up a blockade, or to restrict the dynamic potential of the opponent's forces, but not for the sake of performing a crude act of aggression. The crude is obsolete!'

In the same vein is the following fine win by Black, illustrating no less vividly Nimzowitsch's favourite ideas of blockade and the general restriction of mobility.

Game 95
P.Johner-A.Nimzowitsch
Dresden 1926
Nimzo-Indian Defence E50

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4

At that time this flexible defence was not taken seriously, whereas nowadays it is one of the most popular openings for Black.

4 e3 0-0

The historic source game Janowski-Nimzowitsch (St Petersburg 1914) went 4...b6 5 ♗d3 ♗b7 6 ♘f3 ♗xc3+ 7 bxc3 d6 (Nimzowitsch himself suggested 7...c5! and ...♘c6) 8 ♕c2 ♘bd7 9 e4 e5 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♗g5 h6 12 ♗d2 ♖e8 with a lengthy battle 'for' and 'against' d4-d5.

Then Nimzowitsch came to the conclusion that in this set-up the light-squared bishop should be kept on the c8-g4 diagonal. For many years his remarkable system, sometimes called the 'wall', was performed via 4...c5 5 ♗d3 ♘c6 6 ♘f3 ♗xc3+! 7 bxc3 d6 8 e4 (8 ♘d2 e5 – cf. the note to 9...b6) 8...e5, for example:

1) 9 d5 ♘e7 (9...♘a5 has been rejected because of ♘d2-f1-e3: the c4-pawn is securely defended and the knight at a5 is isolated) 10 ♘h4 h6! 11 f4 ♘g6! 12 ♘xg6 fxg6 13 fxe5?! (13 0-0 0-0 14 f5 or 14 ♕e1 is better) 13...dxe5 14 ♗e3 b6 15 0-0 0-0 (here the game is level) 16 a4?! a5! 17 ♖b1 ♗d7 18 ♖b2 ♖b8 19 ♖bf2?! ♕e7 20 ♗c2 g5! 21 ♗d2 ♕e8! 22 ♗e1 ♕g6 23 ♕d3 ♘h5! etc. (Spassky-Fischer, Reykjavik 5th matchgame 1972), while if 11 g3, then 11...g5! (this is also strong after 11 0-0 or 11 f3) 12 ♘g2 (12 ♕f3 ♘fg8) 12...♗h3 followed by ...♕d7 and ...0-0-0;

2) 9 h3 h6 10 ♗e3 b6 11 d5 ♘e7 12 ♘d2 g5!? (12...♘h7!? Timman) 13 ♘f1 (or 13 h4 gxh4! 14 ♖xh4 ♘g6 Yusupov-Karpov, Dortmund 1994) 13...♘g6 14 g3 ♗d7 15 ♗d2 ♕e7! 16 ♘e3 0-0-0 with sharp play (Yusupov-Lalic, Yerevan Olympiad 1996).

As we see, with this move order Black has an important additional resource – queenside castling (or even a walk by the king to the queenside). Therefore since the time of the match games Korchnoi-Karpov (Baguio 3rd and 5th matchgames 1978) White has increasingly often answered 4...c5 with Rubinstein's 5 ♘e2! Today this is considered the strongest move, and Black has considerable problems in equalising. A fresh example is Kramnik-Leko (Budapest rapidplay, 9th matchgame 2001).

5 ♗d3 (here too Rubinstein used to play 5 ♘e2, avoiding the doubling of his pawns)

5...c5 6 ♘f3 ♘c6

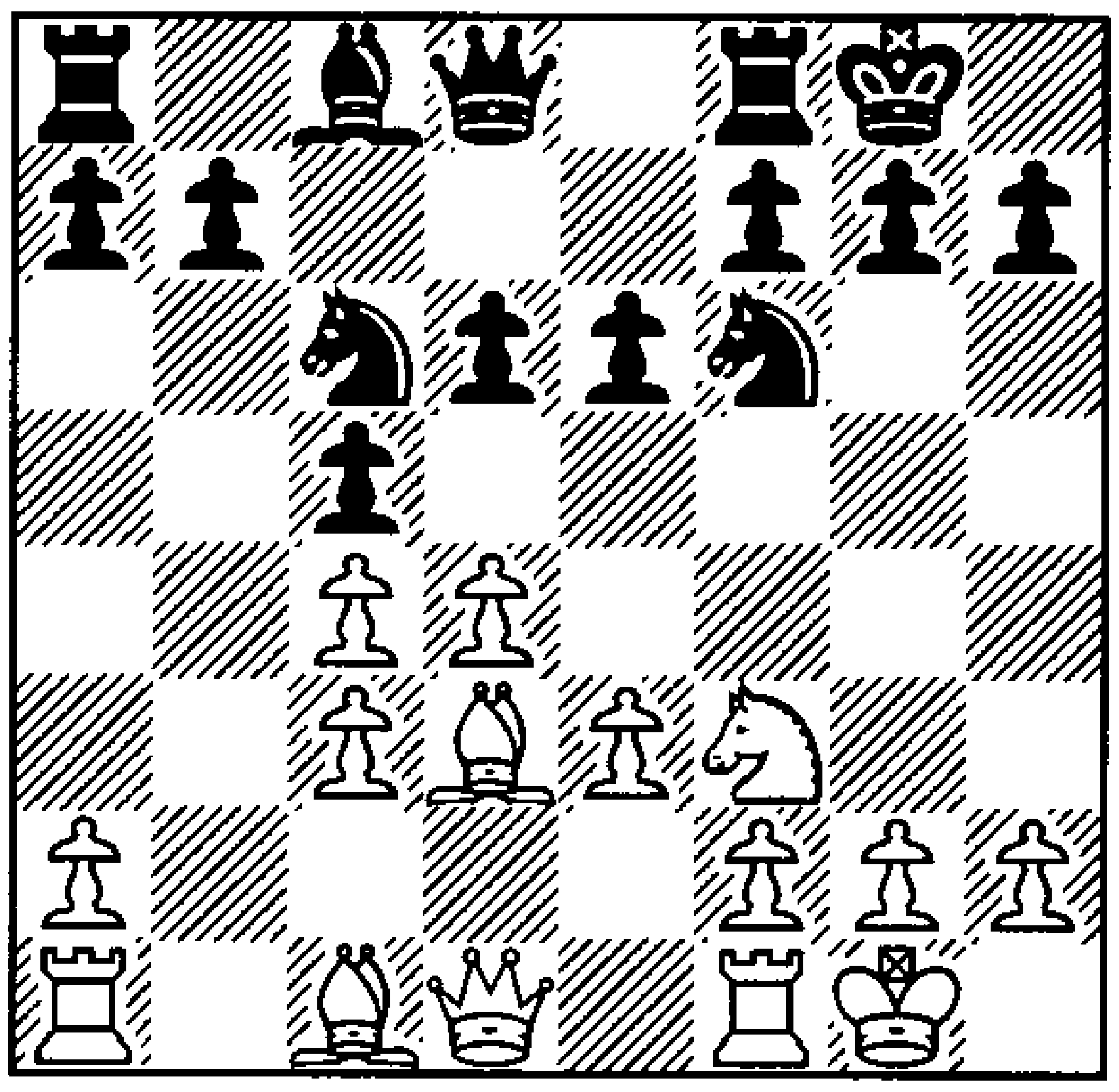
For some time 6...d5! has been preferred, transposing into the 'Modern Variation'.

7 0-0 ♗xc3

The standard 7...d5! 8 a3 ♗xc3 9 bxc3 dxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♕c7 or 9...♕c7 leads to a *tabiya* of the 1950s-70s, which is topical even today: Spassky used to play this, and Kramnik also plays it.

8 bxc3 d6

This is also a theoretical *tabiya*, even with the inclusion of castling.



9 ♘d2

'A fine idea!' (Nimzowitsch) The alternative is 9 e4 e5 10 d5 ♘e7 11 ♘h4, for example: 11...♘g6 12 ♘f5 (12 ♘xg6 fxg6! – Rubinstein!) 12...♖e8 13 ♖b1 h6!? 14 ♕f3 ♖b8 15 g3 ♘h7 16 h4 ♘e7! (Yusupov-Epishin, Dortmund 1994), or 11...h6 12 f3 (12 g3!? g5 13 ♘g2; 12 ♕f3!? ♘g6 13 ♘f5 Hort) 12...g5 13 ♘f5 ♘xf5 14 exf5 ♗d7 with complicated play (Gelfand-Short, Dos Hermanas 1997).

9...b6

With the original idea of 10...e5 11 d5 ♘a5 12 ♘b3 ♘b7!? After the immediate 9...e5! (the main move) Nimzowitsch did not like 10 d5 ♘e7 (10...♘a5?! 11 ♘b3!) 11 e4 with similar play to his aforementioned game with

Janowski. However, experience has shown that after 11...♘g6 12 g3 ♗h3 13 ♖e1 ♘e8 14 ♖b1 ♕d7 (and ...f7-f5) or 11...h6 12 ♖e1 ♘h7 13 ♘f1 f5 Black is alright.

Therefore after 9...e5 White more often tries 10 ♖b1!? or knight moves:

1) 10 ♘b3 – now 10...b6 leads to a position from the game, but Black also has 10...♕e7!? (Portisch-Seirawan, Toluca interzonal 1982) and 10...e4!? (Andersson's move) 11 ♗e2 b6 12 ♗d2 ♘e7! 13 ♔h1 ♘f5 14 ♗e1 ♕e7 with a comfortable game (Portisch-Miles, Niksic 1983);

2) 10 ♘e4 b6 (10...♗f5 has also been played) 11 ♕f3 (11 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 12 ♗e4 ♗b7 13 ♗d5 ♘a5 equalises; 11 f4!?) 11...♗b7 12 ♘g3?! (12 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 13 ♕xf6 gxf6 14 f4! is better) 12...♔h8! 13 d5?! (13 ♕d1) 13...e4! 14 ♗xe4 ♘e5 15 ♕f4 ♗a6 16 ♖d1? g5! 17 ♕xg5 (17 ♕f5 ♗c8) 17...♖g8 18 ♕h6 (18 ♕f4 ♖g4 etc.) 18...♖xg3 19 hxg3 ♘xe4 and wins (Kamsky-Anand, Sanghi Nagar 2nd matchgame 1994).

10 ♘b3?!

Of course, 10 f4! is stronger. Nimzowitsch gives the variation 10...e5 11 fxe5 dxe5 12 d5 ♘a5 13 ♘b3 ♘b7 14 e4 ♘e8 and ...♘ed6 when 'the game would stand about even', but White is not obliged to take on e5, freeing the d6-square for his opponent. However, here it is not a matter of variations, but of the fact that the master was thinking in positional categories that were unknown to the majority of his contemporaries.

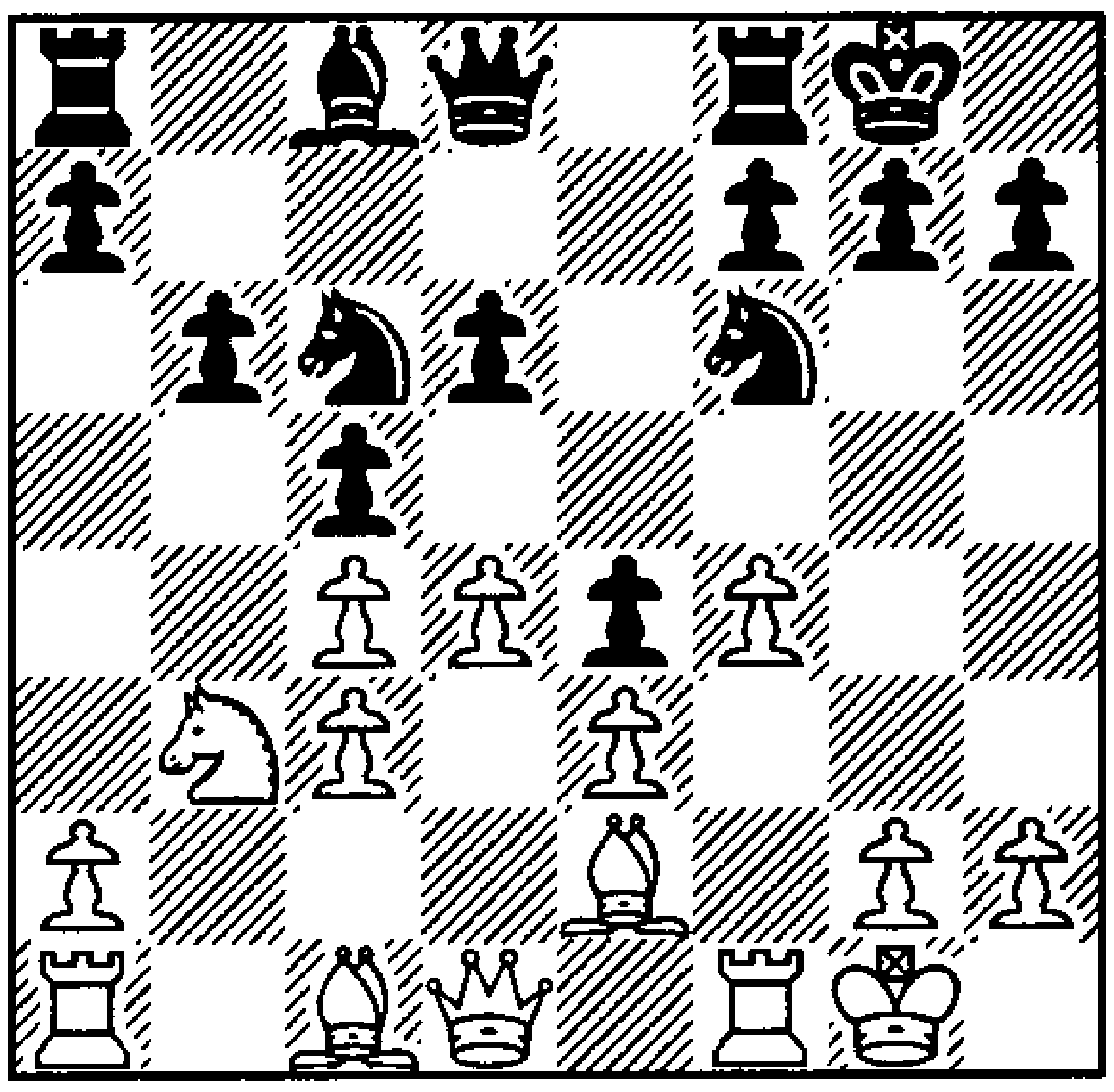
10...e5! 11 f4 e4!?

'This move would also have been the reply to 11 d5, for example 11...e4 12 ♗e2 (12 dxc6 exd3 with advantage to Black) 12...♘e5 with centralisation.' (Nimzowitsch) In 1972 Portisch tried 11 ♗d2 (the solid 11 f3 has also been played) 11...♘e7?! 12 e4 ♘g6 13 f4!, but 11...♕e7! is better.

'11...♕e7 was also possible, for if say 12 fxe5 dxe5 13 d5, then 13...♘d8 (13...e4! is better) 14 e4 ♘e8, and Black by ...♘d6 and ...f7-f6 gets a strong defensive position.' (Nimzowitsch) But nowadays the problems are solved by 11...exd4!? 12 cxd4 cxd4 13 e4 (or 13 exd4 d5!) 13...♖e8 14 ♕f3 ♗b7 15 ♗a3 ♕d7 16 ♖ae1 a5 with sufficient counterplay (Pinter-Razuvaev, Budapest 1982).

12 ♗e2

The time has come for revelations.



12...♕d7!?

The author of this surprising move attaches two exclamation marks to it (in the Russian edition): 'Black sees in White's kingside pawns (f-, g- and h-pawns) a qualitative majority. The text move involves a complicated system of restraint. A simpler one could have been brought about by 12...♘e8, but after 13 g4 (or 13 f5 ♕g5) 13...f5 14 d5 (if 14 dxc5 dxc5 15 ♕d5+ ♕xd5 16 cxd5 ♘e7 17 ♖d1 ♘d6 Black has rather the better game) 14...♘e7 15 g5 this would again lead to a deadlock; we miss the squares at c5 and f5 for the knights. To conduct restrictive operations, while avoiding the deadlock, makes the problem exceedingly difficult to solve.' (Nimzowitsch)

It is amusing that 20th century theory altogether ignored 12...♕d7!? and considered only 12...♘e8 13 ♗d2!? f5 14 ♗e1, then h2-h3, g2-g4 and if possible ♗h4 with some initiative for White.

13 h3

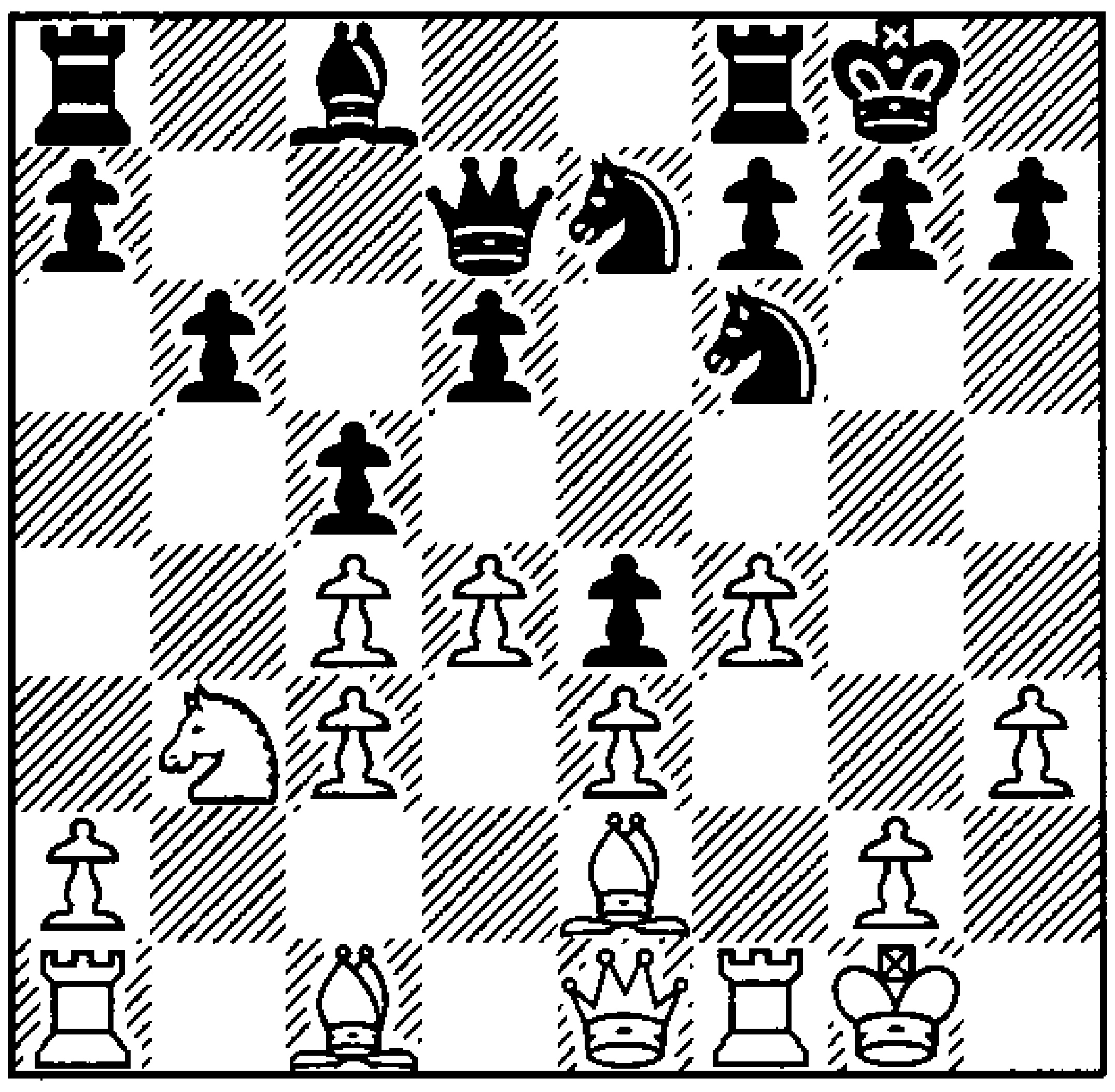
Later Larsen suggested 13 a4!? (13 ♗d2 ♘e7 14 ♗e1 ♗a6!, and if 15 ♗h4? ♘f5 16 ♗f2 cxd4! 17 cxd4 d5 with pressure) 13...a5

14 ♗d2 ♘e7 15 ♗e1 – after 15...♗a6! 16 ♘d2 d5 17 ♗f2 ♖fc8 Black has some initiative, but White's position is fairly solid and there is nothing terrible for him as yet. Also interesting is Szabo's recommendation 13 f5!? ♘e7 14 g4 h5 15 h3 hxg4 16 hxg4 with counterplay on the kingside. However, for the moment Johner has no understanding of what is going on...

13...♘e7 14 ♕e1?

But this is an obvious mistake: the queen manoeuvre does not at all go together with the previous move. Once White had played 13 h3, he should have continued 14 g4!? or at least 14 ♔h2!? (Szabo).

There was also 14 ♗d2, after which Nimzowitsch recommended 14...♘f5 15 ♕e1 g6 16 g4 ♘g7 17 ♕h4 ♘fe8 18 a4 (otherwise ...♕a4) 18...f5 19 g5 ♘c7 20 d5 ♗a6! (20...a5!?) 21 ♔f2 (21 a5 b5) 21...♕f7! 22 ♖fd1 (22 ♕h6? ♘xd5! 23 cxd5 ♗xe2 24 ♔xe2 ♕xd5 25 ♘c1 ♘h5!, cutting off the queen) 22...♔h8, then 23...♘h5, ...♖g8, ...♔g7-f8-e7-d7 and ...h7-h6!, and Larsen – 14...h5!? 15 ♗xh5 (15 ♗e1 ♘f5 16 ♗f2 g6) 15...♘xh5 16 ♕xh5 ♕a4! (16...♗a6 17 f5!) 17 f5 f6 with an excellent game for Black (18 ♖f4? ♗xf5).



14...h5!

The start of a pawn-piece squeeze. Now White is tied down and has no active possibilities.

15 ♗d2 (but not 15 ♕h4? ♘f5 16 ♕g5 ♘h7 17 ♕xh5 ♘g3) **15...♕f5!**

An amazing conception! 'The queen is bound for... h7! where she will be excellently placed, for then the crippling of White's kingside by ...h5-h4 will at once be threatened.' (Nimzowitsch)

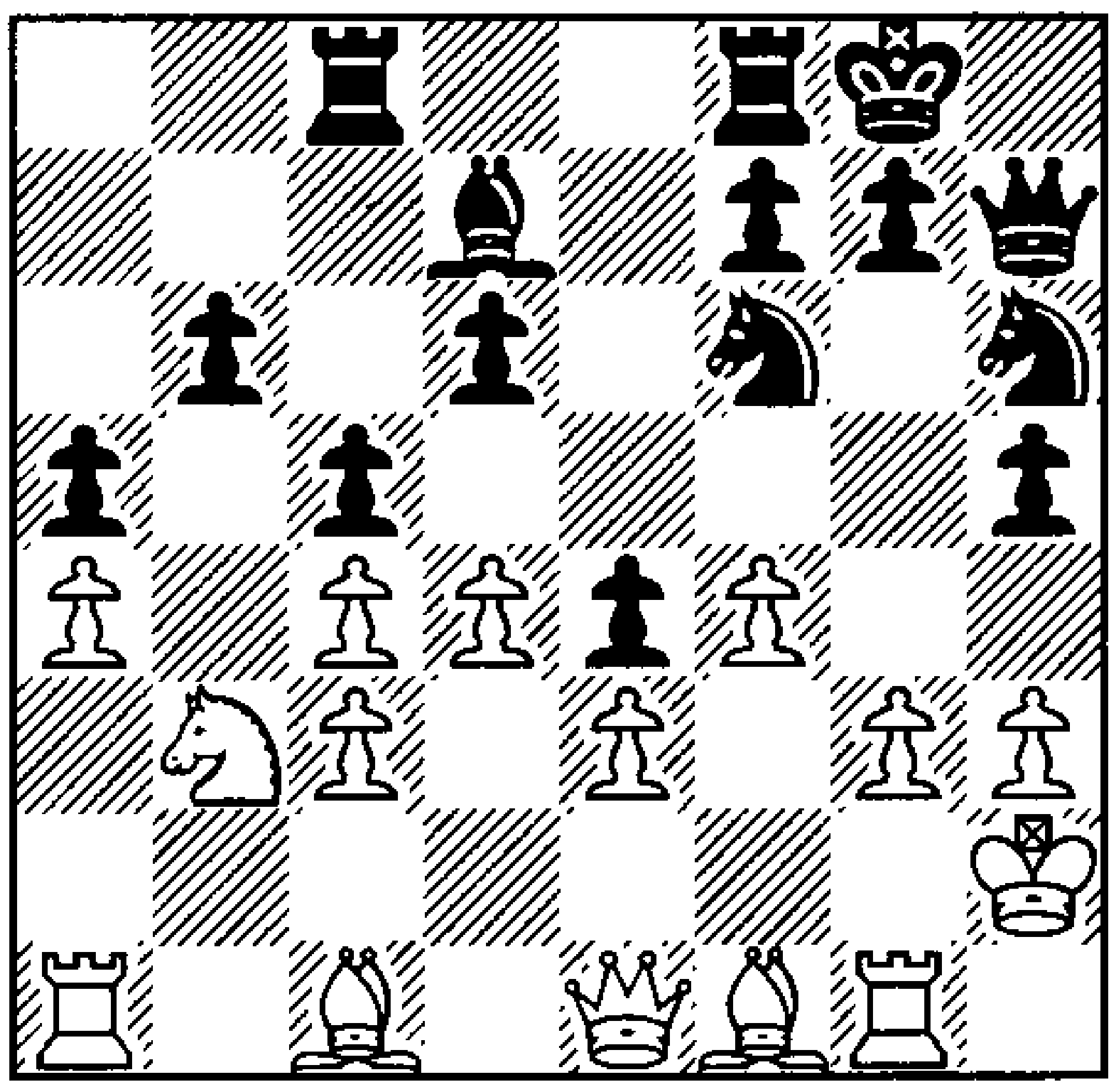
16 ♔h2 ♕h7! 17 a4 ♘f5 (with the threat of 18...♘g4+ 19 hxg4? hxg4+ 20 ♔g1 g3 winning) **18 g3**

Larsen suggests 18 a5!, and he is right: 18...♘g4+ 19 ♗xg4! hxg4 20 axb6 gxh3 21 gxh3 ♘h4 22 ♕g3 with unclear complications. And although 18...♗d7 is possible with some advantage, even so White's position is better than in the game.

18...a5

Depriving the opponent of his last counterplay. The weakness at b6 is balanced by the weakness at a4 (as also in the aforementioned Spassky-Fischer game!).

19 ♖g1 ♘h6 20 ♗f1 ♗d7 21 ♗c1 ♖ac8



Threatening by ...♗e6 and ...cxd4! to force d4-d5, 'in order then to operated undisturbed on the kingside.' (Nimzowitsch) It is a real pleasure to watch how Black converts his advantage!

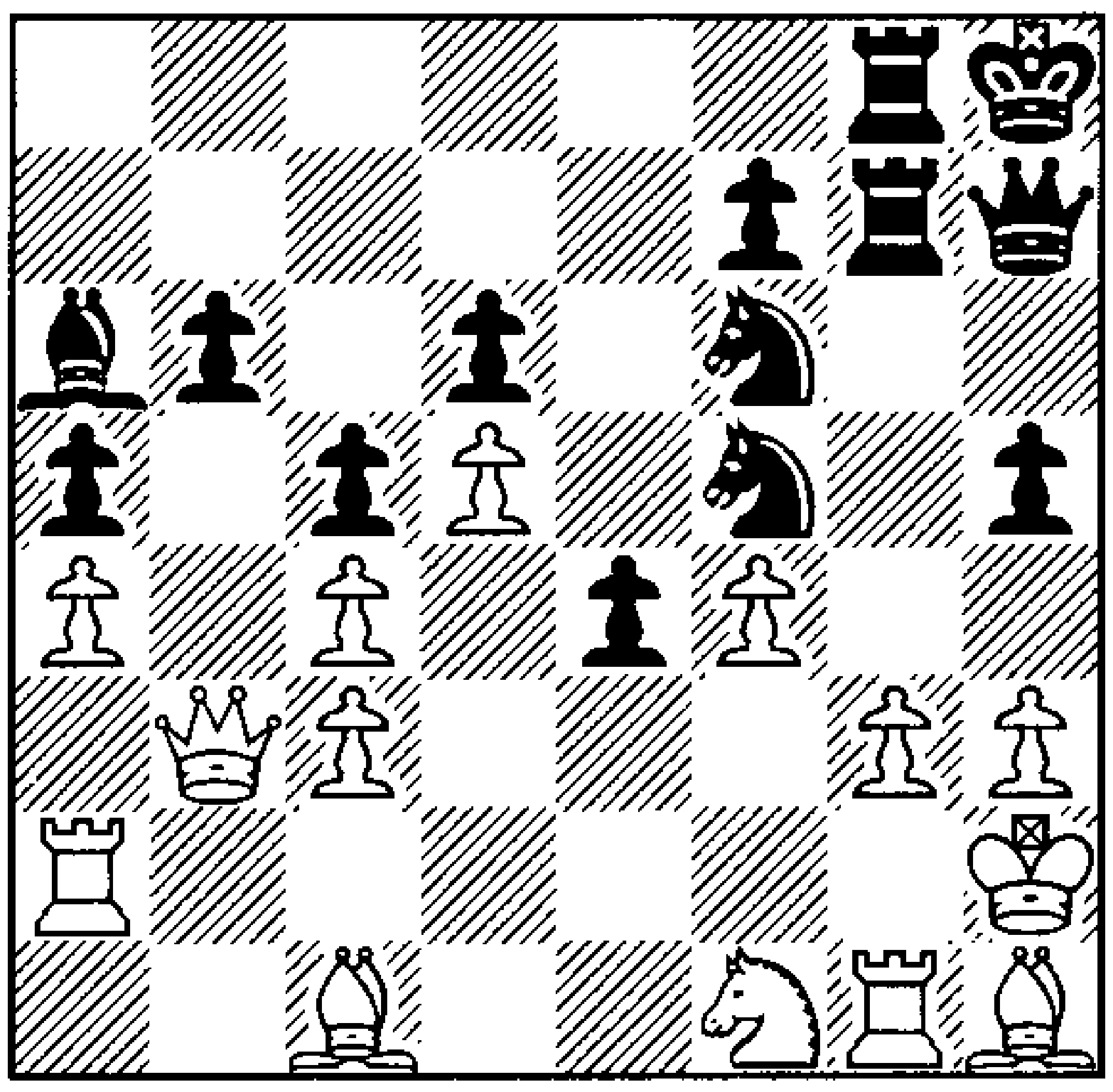
22 d5 ♔h8 23 ♘d2 (or 23 ♔g2 ♖g8 24 ♔f2 g5!) **23...♖g8**

The start of the decisive attack, the logical precondition for which was restricting the mobility of the white pawns.

24 ♗g2 g5 25 ♘f1 ♖g7 26 ♖a2 ♘f5 27 ♗h1 ♖cg8 28 ♕d1 gxf4!

'Opens the g-file for himself, but the e-file for his opponent. This move, therefore, demanded deep deliberation.' (Nimzowitsch)

29 exf4 ♗c8 30 ♕b3 ♗a6



31 ♖e2

If 31 ♗d2 Black would have won by the pretty 31...♖g6! 32 ♗e1 ♘g4+ 33 hxg4 hxg4+ 34 ♔g2 ♗xc4! 35 ♕xc4 e3!! – a quiet move with unavoidable mate or the win of the queen. But now too the finish is no less fine:

31...♘h4! 32 ♖e3

'Here I naturally expected 32 ♘d2. But a result of that move would have been a delightful queen sacrifice, namely: 32...♗c8! (but not 32...♕f5? 33 ♕d1! ♗c8 34 ♕f1) 33 ♘xe4 (33 ♕d1 ♗xh3! 34 ♔xh3 ♕f5+) 33...♕f5! 34 ♘f2 ♕xh3+! 35 ♘xh3 ♘g4 mate.' (Nimzowitsch)

32...♗c8 33 ♕c2 ♗xh3! 34 ♗xe4 (or 34 ♔xh3 ♕f5+ 35 ♔h2 ♘g4+ 36 ♔h3 ♘f2+ 37 ♔h2 ♕h3 mate) **34...♗f5**

Accuracy to the end: there is no defence against ...h5-h4.

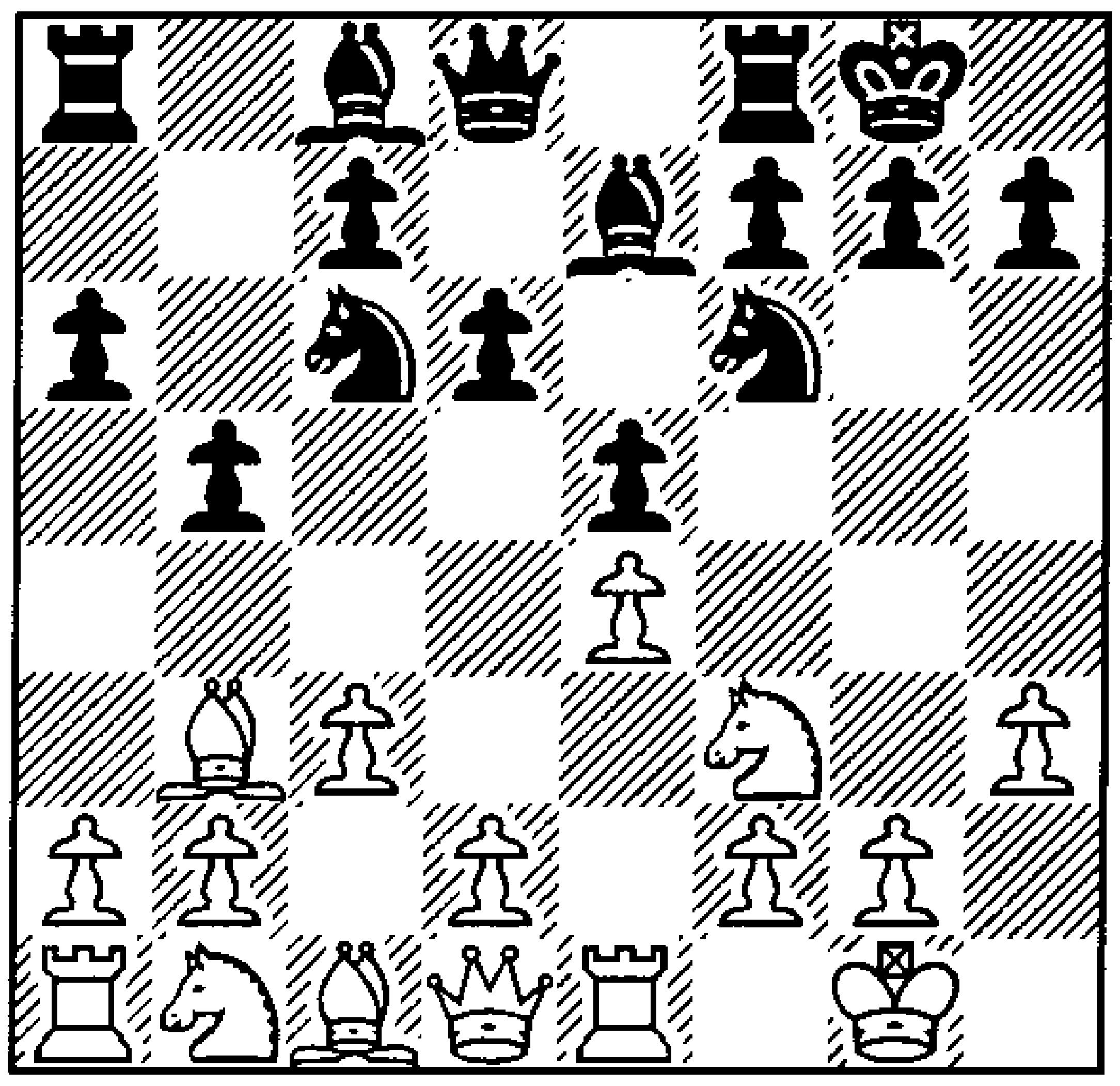
35 ♗xf5 ♘xf5 36 ♖e2 h4 37 ♖gg2 hxg3+ 38 ♔g1 ♕h3 39 ♘e3 ♘h4 40 ♔f1 ♖e8! 0-1

With the threat of 41...♘xg2 42 ♖xg2 ♕h1+ 43 ♔e2 ♕xg2+! And if 41 ♔e1, then 41...♘f3+ 42 ♔d1 ♕h1+ and mate.

As I have already mentioned, Nimzowitsch considered Chigorin to be his teacher. It was from him that he adopted the 'incorrect' (by the standards of the time) system with the moves ...♘f6, ...d7-d6, ...♘bd7, ...e7-e5 and ...♗e7, or even ...g7-g6 and ...♗g7, thus becoming one of the founders of the King's Indian Defence, although **1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f4 0-0 6 ♘f3 ♘bd7** had already occurred in the games Schwarz-L. Paulsen (Leipzig match 1879) and Englisch-Tarrasch (Hamburg 1885). Then Tartakower and Réti played this way, but this opening only reached its heyday in the mid-20th century – by the efforts of Konstantinopolsky, Boleslavsky, Bronstein and Geller (as detailed in the second Volume).

The young Nimzowitsch so liked the Indian set-up, that he also employed it in the Philidor Defence – for example, against Teichmann (San Sebastian 1911): **1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 ♘f6! 4 ♘c3 ♘bd7** (the Hanham Variation; later Nimzowitsch switched to 4...exd4) **5 ♗c4 ♗e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♕e2 c6 8 ♗g5?!** (8 a4!) **8...h6 9 ♗h4 ♘h5 10 ♗g3 ♘xg3 11 hxg3 b5 12 ♗d3 a6! 13 a4 ♗b7 14 ♖ad1 ♕c7** with an excellent game for Black.

Was it not this set-up that produced the remarkable idea of another hypermodernist, the Hungarian master Gyula Breyer (1893-1921)? In a key position of the Ruy Lopez after **1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3** instead of the usual 9...♘a5 10 ♗c2 c5 he suggested a paradoxical manoeuvre.



9...♘b8!? 10 d4 ♘bd7, for example: 11 ♘bd2 ♗b7 12 ♗c2 ♖e8 13 ♘f1 ♗f8 14 ♘g3 g6 15 b3 c6 16 ♗g5 h6 17 ♗e3 ♗g7 18 ♕d2 ♔h7 19 ♘h2 ♕c7 with a flexible position '*à la* Nimzowitsch'.

At the end of the 20th century the Breyer Variation (and the variation of Igor Zaitsev which grew out of it: 9...♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 with the idea of ...♗f8 and only then ...♘b8-d7) gained considerable popularity, as we will see from a game analysed in the second volume, R. Byrne-Spassky (San Juan 3rd matchgame 1974).

With his ability to think in deep and original schemes, Nimzowitsch (like Rubinstein too) was far ahead of his time. His plans were deadly against weaker opponents, but... they did not work against the world champions. Nimzowitsch had a pitiful individual score against Capablanca and Alekhine: he simply could not withstand the overwhelming mental power of these great players, who intuitively understood all his positional revelations.

I think that Capablanca did not even think about formulations, but he knew everything about blockade, about weak points, and about manoeuvring, sensing a position with the tips of his fingers. Whereas with Alekhine things often did not get as far as manoeuvring: while Nimzowitsch was preparing to exploit weak points, he was being mated! And although the 'great Aron' did well in tournaments from 1925-31, was in the world's top five, and issued challenges to both Capablanca and Alekhine, sincerely considering himself to be a contender for the throne, he was never genuinely close to the title of world champion.

Nevertheless, Nimzowitsch's contribution to the theory of positional play was enormous. His book *My System* became an invaluable manual for many generations of players (Petrosian grew up on it!). His disputes with Tarrasch expanded the boundaries of our understanding of chess. Tarrasch, as a classic of the post-Steinitz era, opposed with all his heart and soul the 'crooked' ideas of the hypermodernists, who in fact were merely developing the teachings of Steinitz (as Lasker wrote, 'the new school should unite and synthesise that which the two great antagonists, Steinitz and Chigorin, embodied'). I think that the historic dispute of the two titans of chess thinking ended in favour of Nimzowitsch: the popularity of his defence far exceeded the popularity of the Tarrasch – a victory for flexibility!

The Réti Phenomenon

Whereas Nimzowitsch was the pioneer of hypermodernism, and Saviely Tartakower (1887-1956) with his *Die hypermoderne Schachpartie* was its witty populariser, the outstanding Czech grandmaster Richard Réti (1889-1929) staggered everyone in the early 1920s with his spectacular wins at high level, gained with a highly unusual method.

Game 96
R.Réti-A.Rubinstein
Carlsbad 1923
Réti Opening A07

1 ♘f3 d5 2 g3

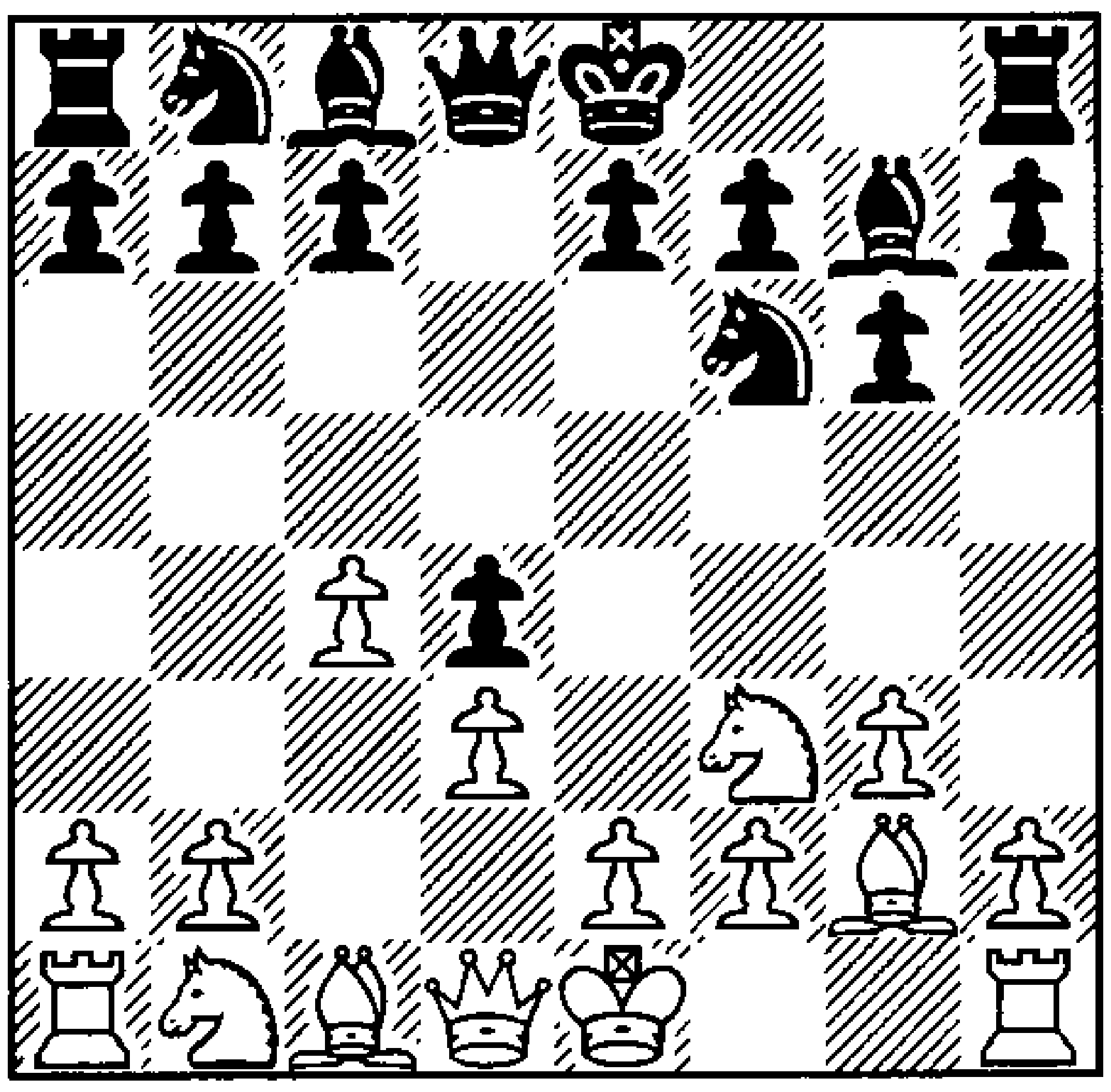
Or 2 c4 c6 3 b3 ♗f5 4 g3 (*Game No.71*); this set-up was also adopted by both Capablanca (*Game No.108*) and Alekhine (*Game No.146*). I should remind you that Morphy and Steinitz avoided the fianchetto and in the 19th century it was employed only by Staunton, Paulsen (both mainly as Black) and Chigorin, but after 1 e4.

2...♘f6 3 ♗g2 g6 4 c4

In contrast to Nimzowitsch, who played 1 ♘f3, 2 b3 and 3 ♗b2 and put pressure on the e5-square, Réti puts pressure on d5. As he wrote, what is common for the hypermodernists 'is only the fact that they are all seekers, aiming to discover new (apart from those established by Steinitz) strategic laws; but they proceed towards this goal in the most varied ways.'

Yes, those were glorious times, when playing chess, which was still full of unresolved mysteries, became a battle of philosophical conceptions... In the given instance it was Réti who was proved historically correct: the pressure on d5 is after all more effective than that on e5.

4...d4 (4...c6 is sounder) **5 d3 ♗g7**



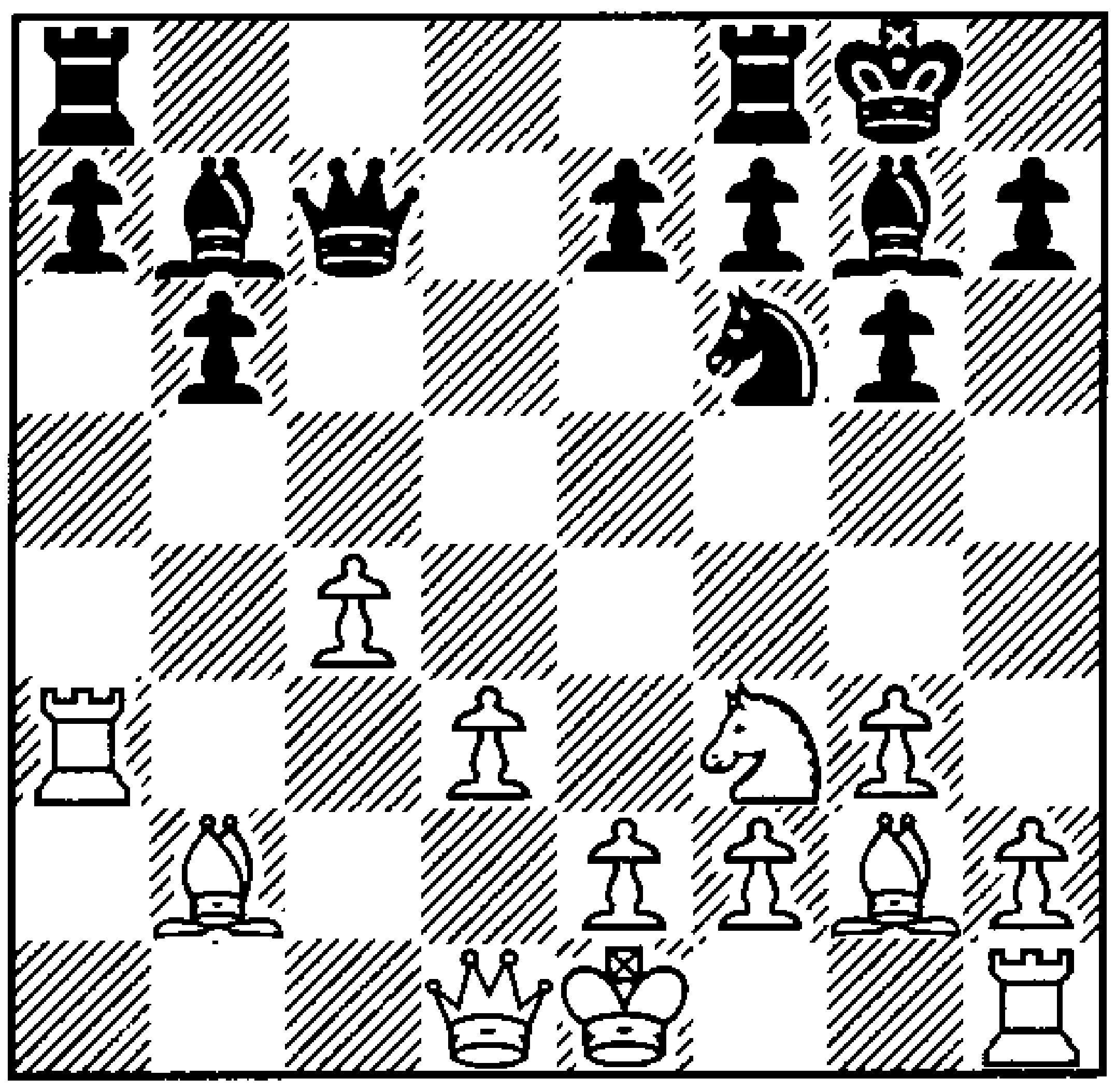
6 b4!

'The d4-pawn needs to be isolated, in order then either to win it, or to force Black after e2-e3 to exchange it, which will give White an imposing advantage in the centre.' (Kmoch)

6...0-0 7 ♘bd2! c5 8 ♘b3 cxb4 9 ♗b2! (9 ♘fxd4 e5! 10 ♘c2 a5 is not so clear) **9...♘c6 10 ♘bxd4 ♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 b6 12 a3!**

What is this, if not the Benko Gambit with reversed colours?! 12 ♘d2? ♕xd4 13 ♗xa8 was incorrect because of 13...♘g4!

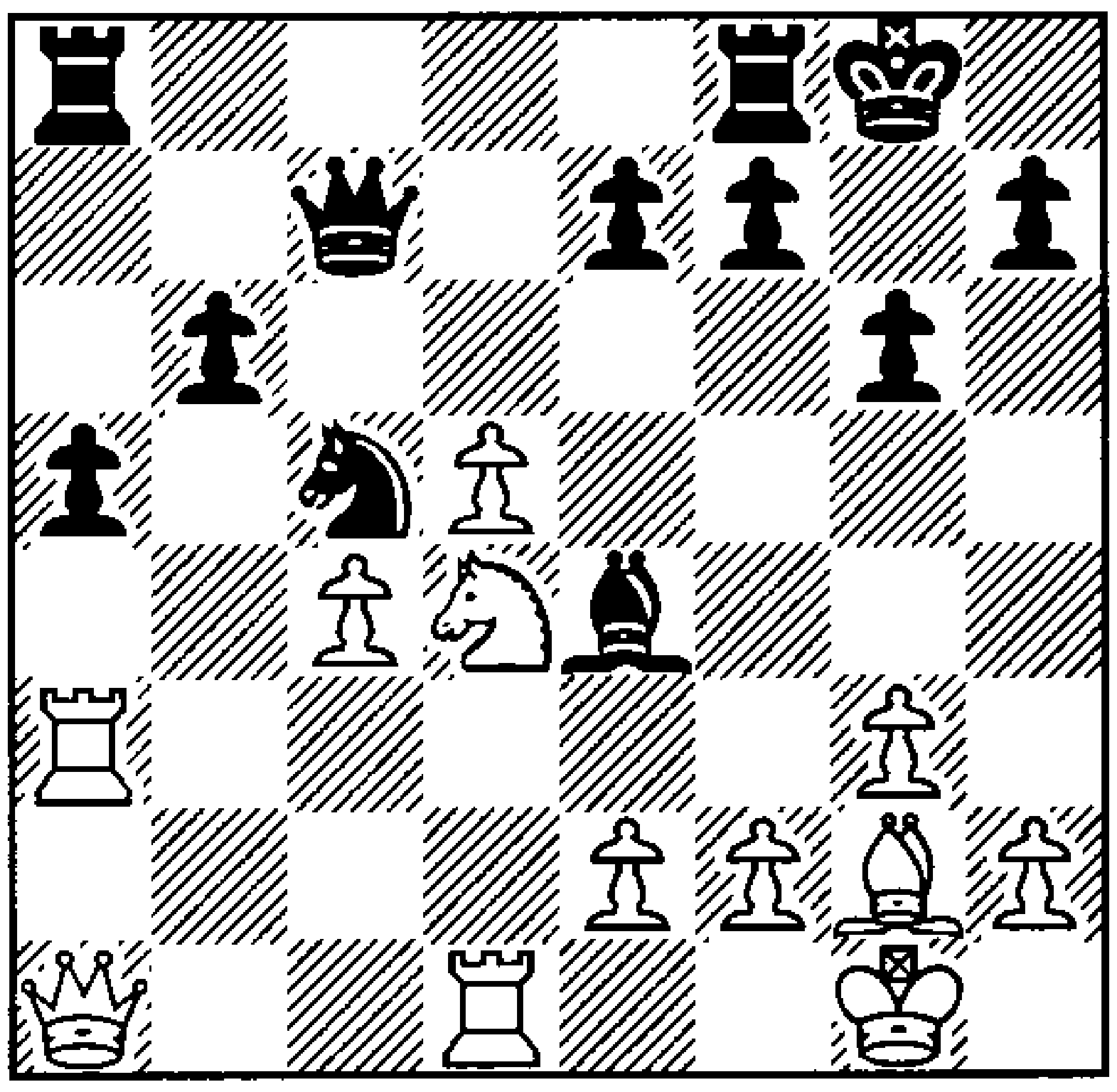
12...♗b7 (threatening 13...♗xf3 14 ♗xf3 ♕xd4 15 ♗xa8 ♘g4) **13 ♗b2 bxa3 14 ♖xa3 ♕c7**



15 ♕a1!

'This move, it can be said, was not found, but created by Réti! It is extremely strong and highly typical of the entire variation in question.' (Kmoch)

15...♘e8 16 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 17 0-0 ♘e6 18 ♖b1 (with the threat of ♖xa7) **18...♗c6 19 d4 ♗e4 20 ♖d1 a5 21 d5 ♘c5 22 ♘d4!**



'The knight invades at c6. Rubinstein's deep strategy has been completely defeated – a very rare occurrence: up till then his opponents had defeated him (also, it is true, not often), mainly combinatively.' (Kmoch)

Yes, for a classic player it was rather hard playing such a non-classical position. He appeared to defend normally, tenaciously, but was literally suffocated on the queenside...

22...♗xg2 23 ♔xg2 ♖fd8 (23...♖fc8!?) **24 ♘c6 ♖d6 25 ♖e3 ♖e8**

An important moment. Maróczy considered the least evil to be the exchange sacrifice – 25...♖xc6!? 26 dxc6 ♕xc6+, and he was right: such a knight cannot be endured! However, all the same after 27 f3 White should have gradually won.

Rubinstein was relying on his trumps – the 'eternal' knight at c5 and passed a-pawn, but here the weakness of the c6-square and the b6-pawn are far more significant. White's combined attack proves decisive.

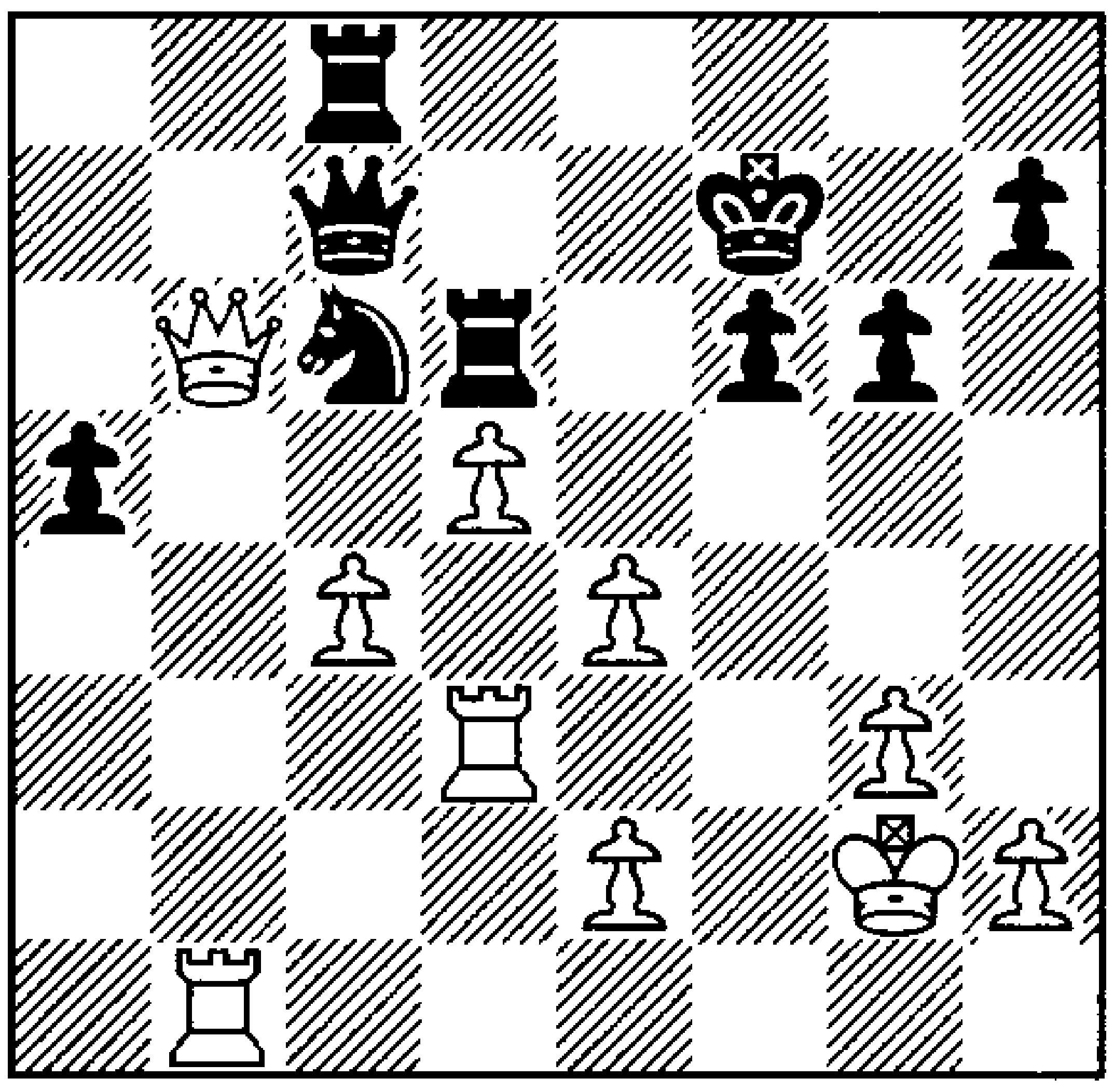
26 ♕e5 f6 27 ♕b2 e5 28 ♕b5! ♔f7 29 ♖b1 ♘d7 30 f3 ♖c8

For some reason no one has pointed out

that the natural equalising attempt 30...♘b8 31 ♘xb8 ♖xb8 (31...♕xb8 32 c5!) would have been refuted by 32 c5! ♖xd5 33 ♕b3 ♕xc5 34 ♖d3 ♖bd8 35 ♖bd1 a4 36 ♕a2 ♔e6 37 e4 winning.

31 ♖d3! (a subtle manoeuvre) **31...e4!?** (desperation: 31...♘b8 32 c5! or 31...♘c5 32 ♕xb6!) **32 fxe4 ♘e5 33 ♕xb6! ♘xc6**

After 33...♘xd3 34 exd3 the avalanche of white passed pawns is irresistible.



34 c5! (a murderous interposition) **34...♖d7 35 dxc6 ♖xd3 36 ♕xc7+ ♖xc7 37 exd3 ♖xc6 38 ♖b7+ ♔e8 39 d4 ♖a6 40 ♖b6! ♖a8**

Or 40...♖xb6 41 cxb6 ♔d8 42 e5 fxe5 43 dxe5 a4 44 e6 a3 45 b7 ♔c7 46 b8♕+ ♔xb8 47 e7 a2 48 e8♕+. The remainder is clear without any commentary.

41 ♖xf6 a4 42 ♖f2 a3 43 ♖a2 ♔d7 44 d5 g5 45 ♔f3 ♖a4 46 ♔e3 h5 47 h4 gxh4 48 gxh4 ♔e7 49 ♔f4 ♔d7 50 ♔f5 1-0

An amazingly clean, instructional game – a model example of the ideas of hypermodernism!

Réti also played splendidly in the double-round super-tournament in New York 1924, where Capablanca, Lasker and Alekhine met for the first time since 1914.

In the first half of the tournament the 'leader of the revolutionary modern school' (the press definition) inflicted a sensational defeat on the current world champion. This was the first zero for the impregnable Capa since his defeats by Chajes (New York 1916) and Lasker (St Petersburg 1914).

Game 97

R.Réti-J.R.Capablanca

New York 1924, 5th round

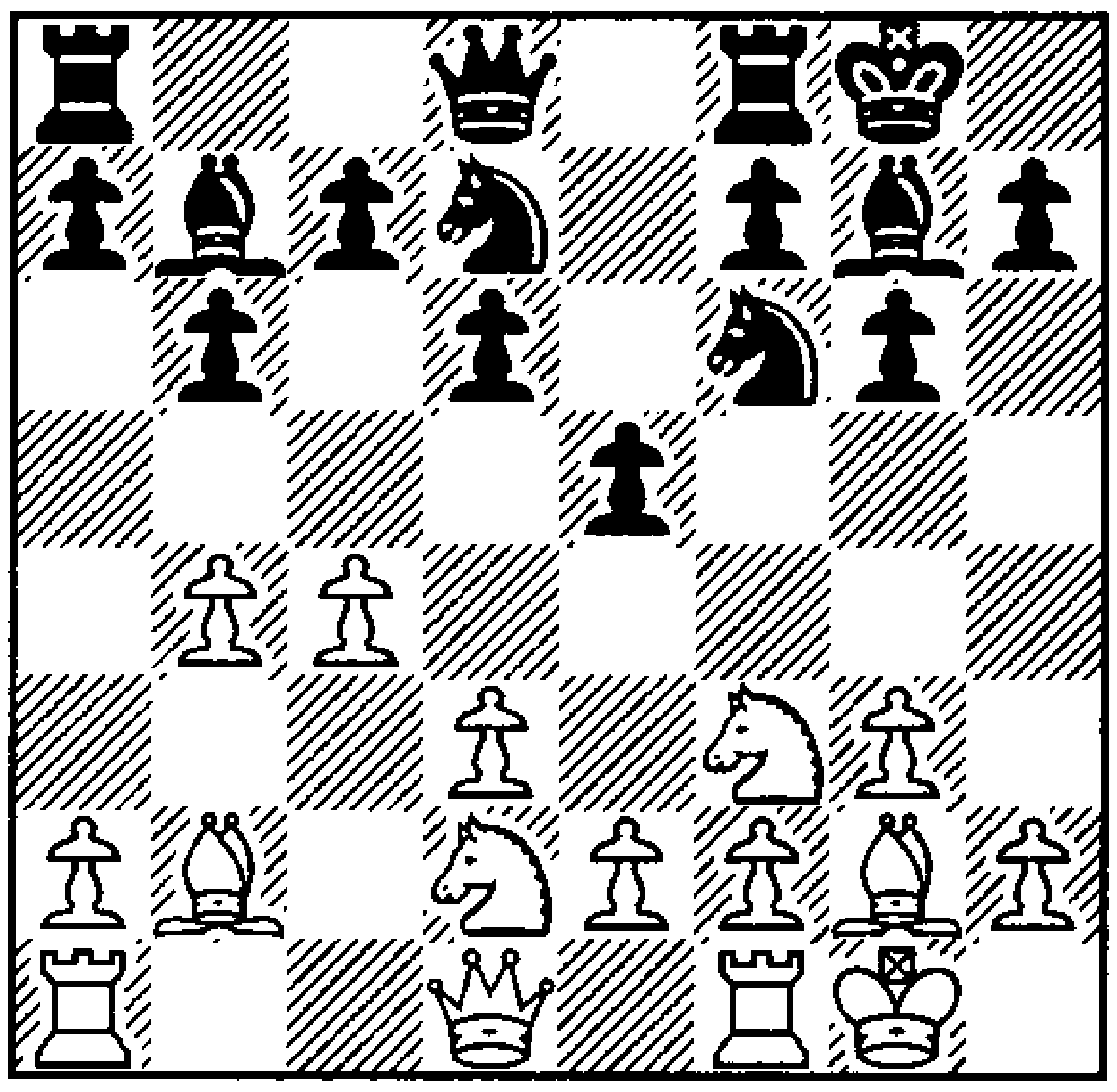
Réti Opening A15

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 b4!? ♗g7

The source game Nimzowitsch-Réti (Carlsbad 1923) went 3...a5 4 b5 ♗g7 5 ♗b2 0-0 6 e3 d6 7 d4 ♘bd7 8 ♗e2 e5 9 0-0 exd4 10 exd4 ♖e8?!, and here 11 ♘c3! would have retained the advantage (Nimzowitsch). However, by 10...♘e4! and ...♘df6 Black could have obtained a fine game, which I did at the age of 12, in a simultaneous display by the master player Katalymov at a pioneers' palace tournament (Leningrad 1974).

4 ♗b2 0-0 5 g3 b6 6 ♗g2 ♗b7 7 0-0 d6 8 d3 ♘bd7 9 ♘bd2 e5

'Capablanca treats the opening simply as well as soundly and, after a few moves, obtains a perfectly even position.' (Alekhine)



10 ♕c2 (10 ♘xe5? ♗xg2 11 ♘xd7 does not work because of 11...♗xf1 winning) **10...♖e8 11 ♖fd1 a5**

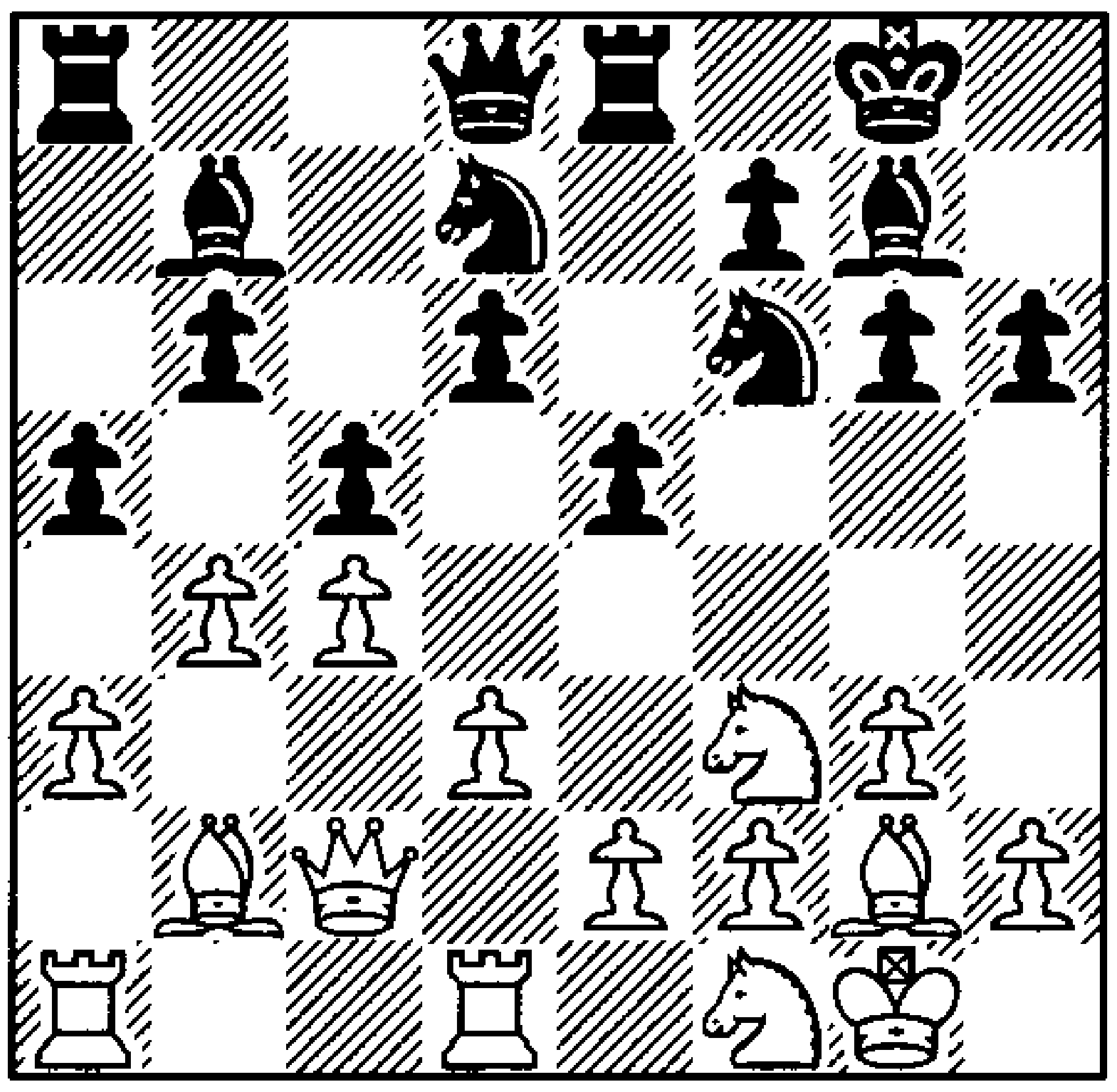
11...e4 12 dxe4 ♘xe4 13 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 14 ♘d4 favours White.

12 a3 h6?!

'This move, which is difficult to understand, is the best proof that Capablanca was poorly disposed that day.' (Alekhine) It is known that the champion began the tournament completely unwell, with a high temperature. True, on the other hand, a witty remark by Larsen comes to mind: 'Not once in my life have I won against a healthy player!'

13 ♘f1 c5!

'A clever positional trap, quite in the champion's style.' (Alekhine)



14 b5

Declining the 'Greek gift'. After 14 bxa5 ♖xa5 15 ♘xe5 ♗xg2 16 ♘xd7 ♗c6! 17 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 18 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 19 ♕d2 h5! Black has more than sufficient compensation for the pawn: 20 ♖ab1 ♖a6 21 ♖b2 d5 etc.

14...♘f8

14...d5?! is dubious in view of 15 cxd5 ♘xd5 16 ♘3d2! ♕e7 17 ♘c4 ♖ad8 18 ♘fd2, when White's control of c4 gives him a pleasant game.

15 e3!? (15 e4 and ♘e3-d5 is really too insipid) **15...♕c7 16 d4 ♗e4 17 ♕c3?**

Of course, 17 ♕c1 is better, although after 17...exd4 18 exd4 ♘e6 Black has no problems.

17...exd4 18 exd4 ♘6d7?

An error in reply. 'Capablanca probably overlooked the check of the queen on the 22nd move, by means of which White protects his b-pawn; otherwise he would undoubtedly have selected the simple move of 18...♘e6, the strength of which was patent. After 19 dxc5 dxc5 20 ♕c1 Black's position, because of the effective distribution of his pieces, would have been somewhat preferable.' (Alekhine)

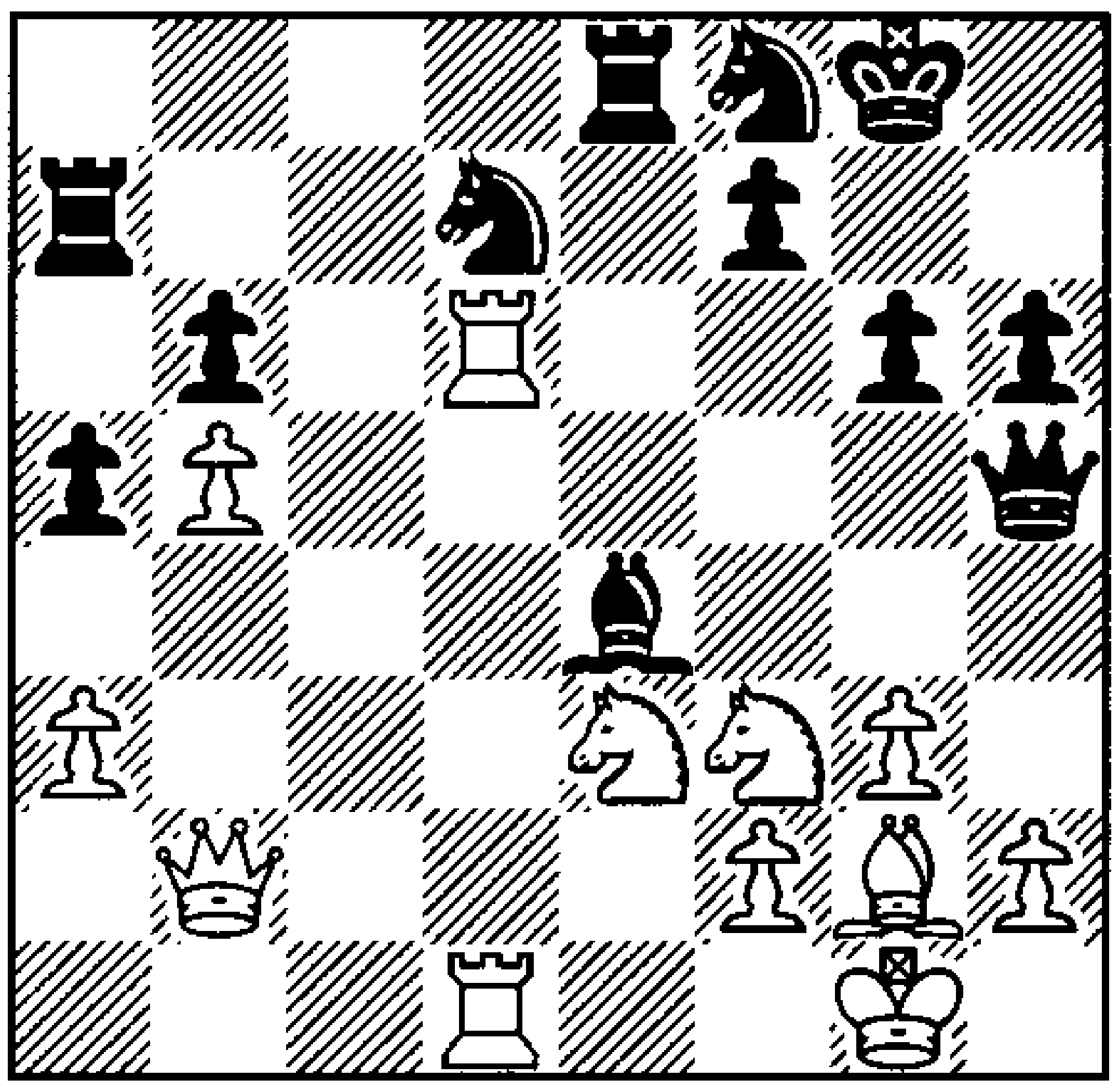
19 ♕d2! cxd4?!

According to Alekhine, better was 19...♖ad8 20 dxc5 dxc5 21 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 22 ♕b2+ ♔g8 23 ♘e3, when it would still, perhaps, have been possible to neutralise White's advantage.

20 ♗xd4 ♕xc4 21 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 22 ♕b2+! ♔g8 23 ♖xd6 (but not immediately 23 ♘3d2?! because of 23...♕c2) **23...♕c5**

Passive was 23...♕c7 24 ♖ad1 ♘c5 25 ♘e3 etc.

24 ♖ad1 ♖a7 25 ♘e3 (with the threat of ♘g4) **25...♕h5**



26 ♘d4!

'The most compelling move. White, to be sure, by means of the surprising continuation of 26 ♖1d5!? ♗xd5 27 g4 ♗xf3 28 gxh5 ♗xh5 29 ♗c6 etc., would have won the queen for a rook, knight and pawn, but the final tussle in that case would have been much more difficult and tedious than after the best defence possible against the move in the text.' (Alekhine)

26...♗xg2 27 ♔xg2 ♕e5?

Undoubtedly more tenacious was 27...♘e5 (27...♖xe3? 28 fxe3 ♕xd1 29 ♘e6 wins; 27...♖c7 28 ♘f3), when White would have had a pleasant choice between 28 ♕e2 (28 ♖xb6?! ♘g4) 28...♕xe2 29 ♘xe2 and 28 ♕b3!? with the threats of ♘d5 and ♖xb6.

28 ♘c4 ♕c5

'The unfortunate queen will presently be unable to find another square.' (Alekhine)

29 ♘c6 ♖c7 (29...♖b7 30 ♘e3) **30 ♘e3 ♘e5** (or 30...♕h5 31 ♖1d5 f5 32 ♖d2 ♔h7 33 ♘d5) **31 ♖1d5! 1-0**

31...♘c4 32 ♖xc5 ♘xb2 33 ♖c2 ♘a4 34 ♘d5 wins.

The inspired Réti then gained a further three brilliant wins in succession and for more than half of the tournament held second place (behind Lasker). The main thing was that no one could resist in his favourite opening!

Game 98
R.Réti-E.Bogoljubow
New York 1924, 12th round
Réti Opening A13

1 ♘f3 d5 2 c4 e6

Alekhine criticised this move, which blocks in the bishop at c8, and recommended Lasker's 2...c6 (Nos.71, 108). But later, here too quite acceptable defensive set-ups were found.

3 g3 ♘f6 4 ♗g2

It is rather too early for the move 4 b3, for example: 4...c5 5 ♗g2 ♘c6 6 0-0 ♗e7 7 d3 (7 cxd5!?) 7...0-0 8 ♗b2 d4 with a complicated game in prospect (Capablanca-Marshall, Moscow 1925).

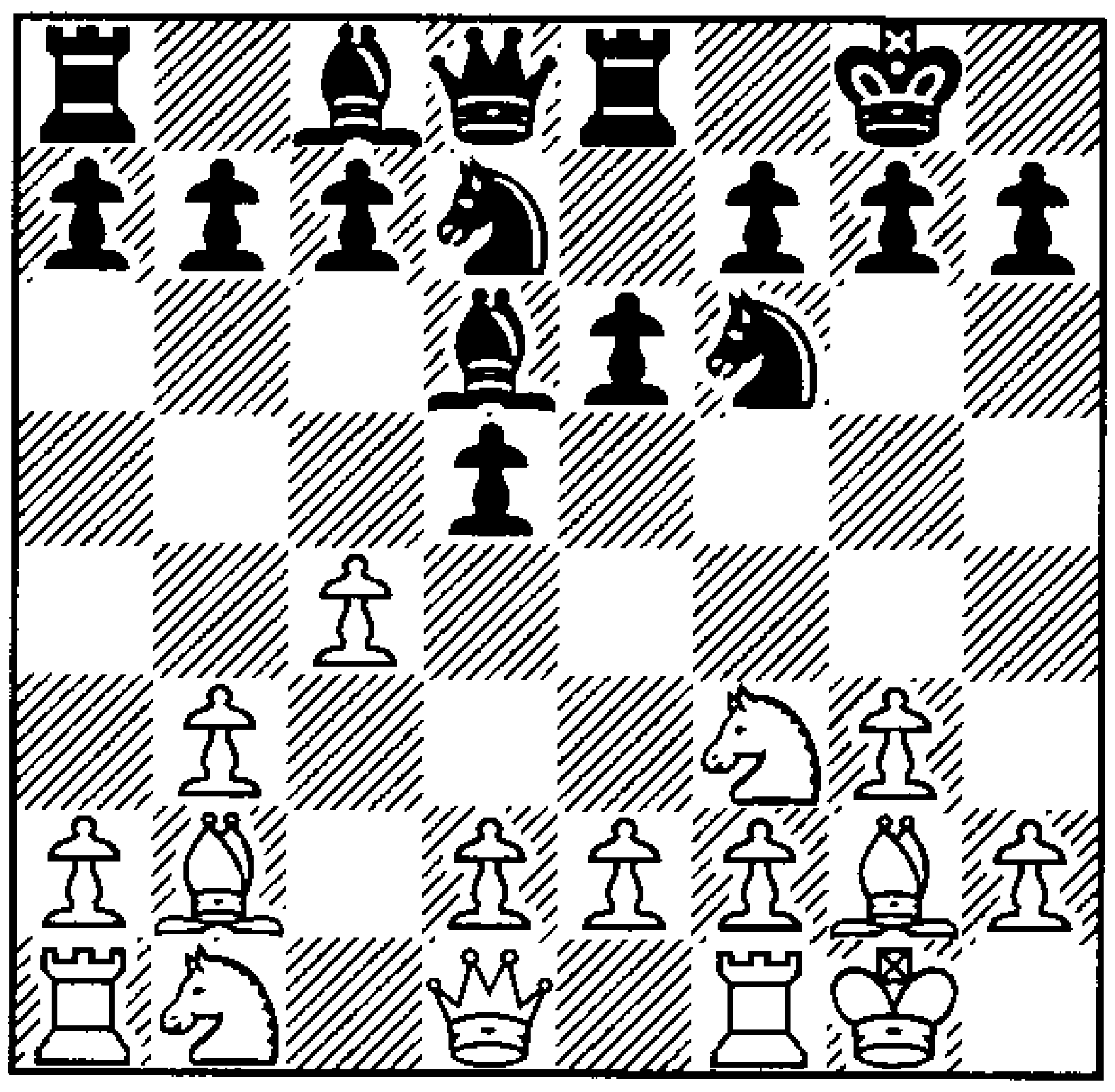
4...♗d6

Dubious is 4...d4?! 5 b4! or 4...c5 5 0-0 d4 6 d3 ♘c6 7 e3! – a Modern Benoni with reversed colours and an extra tempo. Playable, however, is the well-tried 4...dxc4 5 ♕a4+ ♘bd7 6 ♕xc4 c5 (6...a6!?), or 4...♗e7 5 0-0 0-0 6 b3 b6 7 ♗b2 ♗b7 8 e3 (8 cxd5 ♘xd5!) 8...c5 9 ♘c3 dxc4 10 bxc4 ♘c6 etc.

5 0-0 0-0 6 b3 ♖e8?!

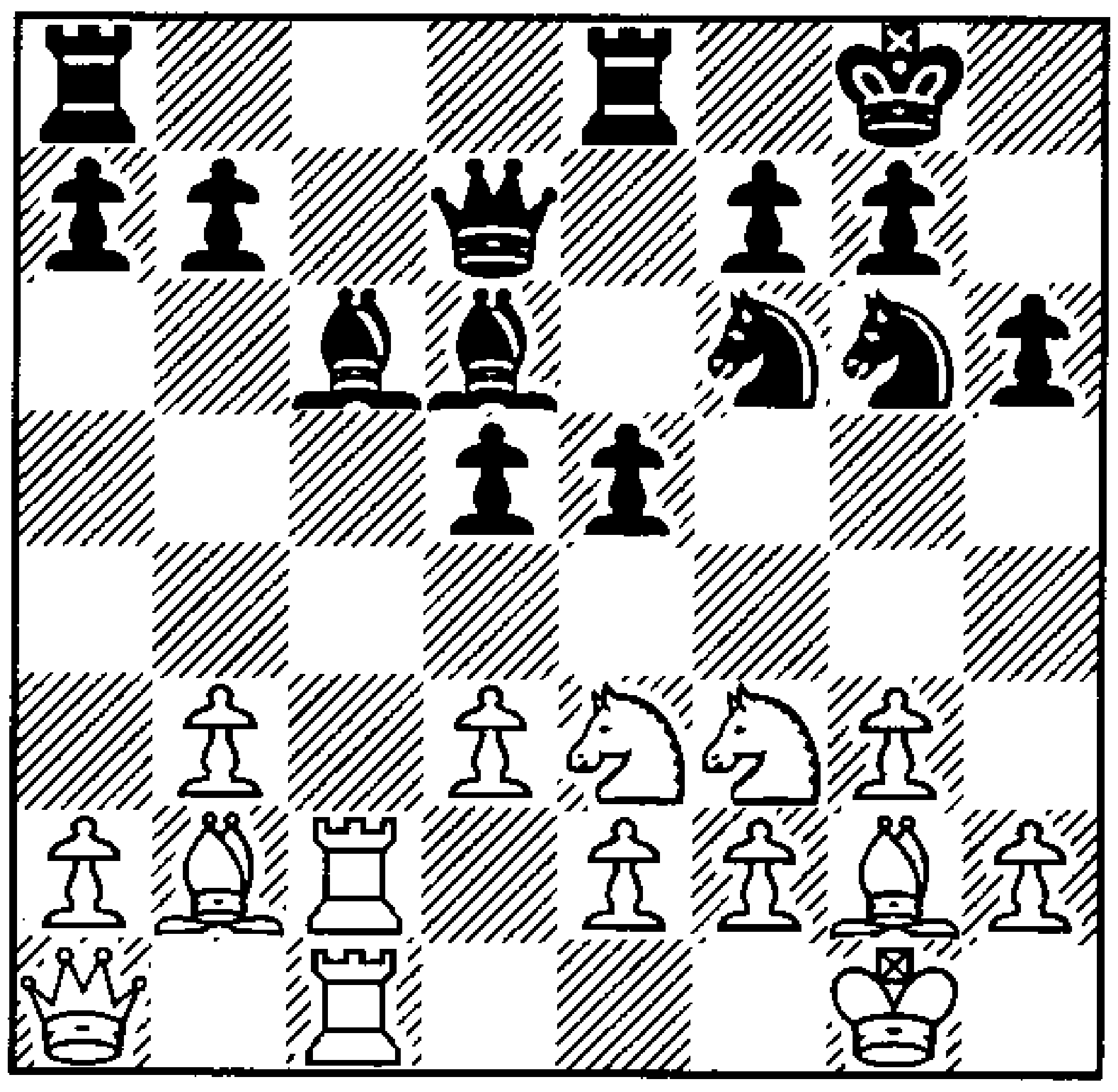
This looks like a waste of a tempo. More accurate is 6...♘bd7 7 ♗b2 c6, and if 8 d4, then 8...♘e4 9 ♘bd2 f5, erecting a 'stonewall' (Réti-Vajda, Semmering 1926), or 8...♕e7 – this set-up also occurs today.

7 ♗b2 ♘bd7



8 d4!

An improvement, suggested by Capablanca! In the sixth round Réti had defeated Yates in pretty fashion after 8 d3 c6 9 ♘bd2 e5 10 cxd5 cxd5 11 ♖c1 ♘f8 12 ♖c2 ♗d7 (12...♗f5!? 13 ♕a1 ♘8d7 Alekhine) 13 ♕a1! ♘g6 14 ♖fc1 ♗c6? 15 ♘f1 ♕d7?! (15...♕e7) 16 ♘e3 h6? (16...d4! 17 ♘c4 ♗c7).



Analysis diagram

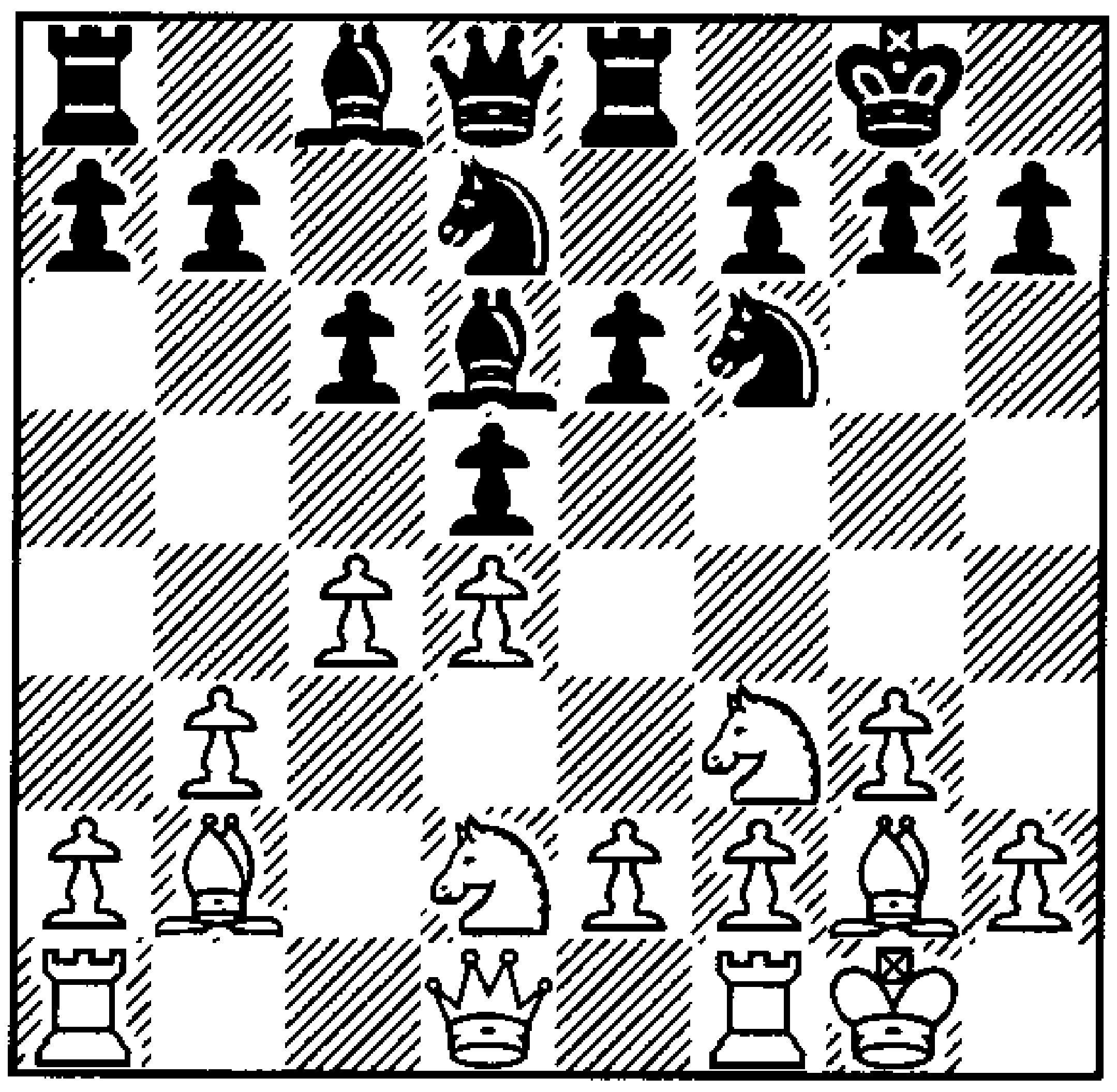
17 d4! (the explosion of a compressed spring!) 17...e4 18 ♘e5 ♗xe5 19 dxe5 ♘h7 20 f4! exf3 21 exf3 ♘g5 22 f4 ♘h3+ 23 ♔h1 d4!? (desperation) 24 ♗xd4 ♖ad8 25 ♖xc6! bxc6 26 ♗xc6 ♘f2+ 27 ♔g2 ♕xd4 28 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 29 ♗xe8 ♘e4 30 e6! ♖d2+ 31 ♔f3 1-0.

But it soon transpired that Black had a normal position: instead of 14...♗c6? he could have chosen between 14...♕e7 15 ♘f1 ♖ac8 16 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 17 ♖xc8+ ♗xc8 18 d4 e4 19

♘e5 ♕c7 with equality (Alekhine) and the more aggressive 14...b5!? 15 ♘f1 ♕b8! 16 ♘e3 a5 (Nimzowitsch).

8...c6 9 ♘bd2

9 ♘e5!? is also good. Surprisingly, a similar position with reversed colours occurred in the 10th round game Marshall-Capablanca: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 g6 3 e3 ♗g7 4 ♘bd2 b6 5 ♗c4?! 0-0 6 ♕e2 c5 7 c3 ♗b7 8 0-0 d5! 9 ♗d3 ♘e4!? 10 ♗xe4?! dxe4 11 ♘g5 e5! 12 ♘gxe4 exd4 13 exd4, and here the simple 13...cxd4! would have retained the advantage.



9...♘e4?!

'If the liberating move of 9...e5, recommended by Rubinstein and others, is really the best here – and this appears to be the case – then it furnishes the most striking proof that Black's entire arrangement of his game was faulty. For the simple continuation of 10 cxd5 cxd5 11 dxe5 ♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 13 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 14 ♘c4 ♖e8 15 ♘e3 ♗e6 16 ♕d4 would have given White a direct attack against the isolated d-pawn, without permitting the opponent any chances whatsoever.' (Alekhine)

The move in the game leads in the end to the exchange of knights, but does not solve Black's main problem – the employment of his c8-bishop.

10 ♘xe4 dxe4 11 ♘e5 f5 12 f3! (the opening of the game increases White's advantage) **12...exf3 13 ♗xf3! ♕c7**

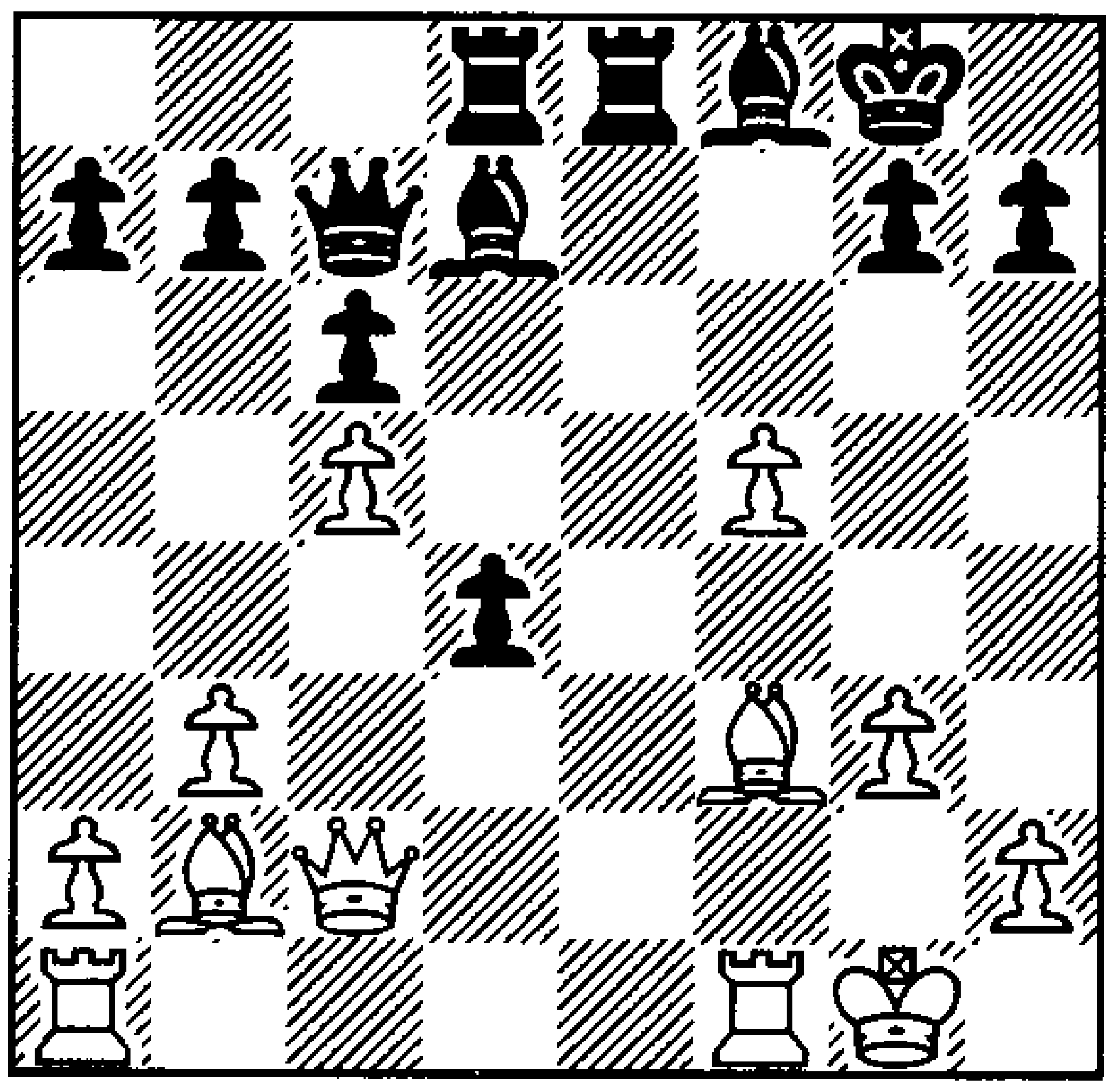
Also unattractive is 13...♘xe5 14 dxe5 ♗c5+ 15 ♔g2 ♗d7 16 e4!

14 ♘xd7! ♗xd7 15 e4 (with the threat of a bind by e4-e5) **15...e5 16 c5 ♗f8 17 ♕c2!**

A double attack – the prelude to a series of energetic and accurately-calculated moves, which destroy Black's defences.

17...exd4 (17...fxe4? 18 ♗xe4 wins) **18 exf5! ♖ad8**

'After 18...♖e5, 19 ♕c4+ ♔h8 20 f6, among other lines, would be very strong.' (Alekhine)



19 ♗h5! (the decisive manoeuvre) **19...♖e5 20 ♗xd4 ♖xf5**

If 20...♖d5, then 21 ♕c4 ♔h8 22 ♗g4 with an extra pawn and the initiative.

21 ♖xf5 ♗xf5 22 ♕xf5 ♖xd4 23 ♖f1! ♖d8 (or 23...♕e7 24 ♗f7+ ♔h8 25 ♗d5! ♕f6 26 ♕c8 and wins) **24 ♗f7+ ♔h8 25 ♗e8! 1-0**

An elegant concluding stroke. Black resigns. The first brilliancy prize!

In the next round he also defeated Alekhine, who later, talking not only about this game, admitted: 'Réti is the only grandmaster whose moves are often completely unexpected to me.' However, soon Réti met his match – he lost in his opening to the leader, Lasker (*Game No.71*). This clearly depressed him and after losing with Black to Yates, Edward Lasker and Capablanca, he dropped down to fifth place...

For the highest successes the talented Czech player lacked competitive qualities and a reliable defence against 1 e4. As Tartakower wrote: 'Réti is a brilliant type of artist, who battles not so much with his opponents, as with himself, with his own ideals and doubts.'

It was also then, in the early 1920s, that the Austrian grandmaster Ernst Grünfeld (1893-1962) revealed to the world another hypermodern opening – **1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5**, allowing 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 and attacking the pawn centre by 6...♗g7 and ...c7-c5. The sharp, dynamic Grünfeld Defence soon won a place under the sun, especially as Alekhine promptly included it in his repertoire. Later great contributions to its development were made by Botvinnik, Smyslov, Korchnoi, Fischer...

Generally speaking, Alekhine was quick to take up virtually all the latest achievements of chess thinking. This related not only to the 'Réti' (including with reversed colours), the 'Grünfeld', the 'Nimzo' or the Queen's Indian Defence. On seeing a Moscow first category player reply to **1 e4** with the strange move **1...♘f6**, Alekhine substantiated and in 1921 introduced into serious competition this more than hypermodern defence, which received his name and the recognition by Nimzowitsch of 'Alekhine's most outstanding discovery: the move 1...♘f6 is stunning, it cannot be called other than brilliant.'

I should also mention the first sensational testing of the Blumenfeld Gambit (a forerunner of the Benko Gambit): **1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5!? 4 d5 b5!? 5 dxe6** (5 ♗g5!) **5...fxe6 6 cxb5 d5 7 e3 ♗d6 8 ♘c3 0-0 9 ♗e2** (after Réti's move 9 e4!? correct is 9...♘bd7!) **9...♗b7 10 b3 ♘bd7 11 ♗b2 ♕e7 12 0-0 ♖ad8 13 ♕c2 e5** with powerful play for the pawn (Tarrasch-Alekhine, Pistyan 1922). Incidentally, a similar motif occurred in the match games Korchnoi-Karpov (Baguio 7th and 17th matchgames 1978), which I will describe in the third volume.

Capablanca also endeavoured not to be out of step with the times and tried playing the 'Réti', the 'Alekhine' (against Yates in Moscow 1925), the 'Nimzo' and other fashionable setups. See how he performed 'at sight' the Modern Benoni with reversed colours: **1 ♘f3 d5 2 g3 c5 3 ♗g2 ♘c6 4 0-0 e5 5 c4 d4 6 d3 ♗d6 7 e3 ♘ge7 8 exd4** (according to Capa, first 8 ♘bd2! with the idea of ♘e4 was more accurate) **8...cxd4 9 a3 a5 10 ♘bd2 ♘g6?! 11 ♖e1 0-0 12 ♕c2 ♖e8 13 b3 h6** (13...f6!) **14 ♖b1 ♗e6 15 h4!? ♖c8?** (15...♕e7; 15...b6) **16 c5! ♗b8 17 ♘c4 f6 18 ♗d2 ♔h8 19 b4** etc. (Capablanca-Janowski, New York 1924).

However, in general the Cuban was not an openings expert and he did little work in this field. 'He had a high regard for his talent and thought that he would always outplay his opponent at the board,' writes Botvinnik. 'But doesn't one have to be familiar with modern openings? Capablanca "observed" what his opponents were playing, evaluated these variations critically, and if necessary, employed them.'

An interesting observation was made by Réti: 'Instead of applying Morphy's principle of developing all the pieces as quickly as possible he was guided in his play by some plan based as much as possible on positional considerations. According to that method every move not demanded by that plan amounts to loss of time.' And the main principle of the middlegame, formulated by Capablanca, was the coordinated action of all his pieces.

We will add to the portrait of the champion with a commendation by Nimzowitsch: 'Analyse various typical positions! That is how Capablanca works. He is eternally analysing and it is always typical positions. Capablanca is familiar with a mass of such positions – mainly from the field of queen and rook endgames.' Yes, Capa was deeply convinced that 'to improve at chess you should in the first instance study the endgame.'

With the appearance of innovatory openings and the emergence into the arena of a new generation of masters, chess greatly revived, discovering in itself a chasm of unexplored possibilities. And by the mid-30s talk about the threat of its draw death had somehow petered out of its own accord. At any event, both Lasker and Capablanca remembered about their fears with a smile...

From London to New York

'I did not want to stand in the way of the young,' Lasker declared after the match in Havana, 'and so I am prepared to give up my right to a return match to clear the way for Rubinstein whom I rate highly.' Yes, Akiba remained the main contender for the world championship, but after the war his success curve went downhill. And at the same time Alekhine, Réti and Bogoljubow had started to make progress...

The first major tournament, where the new champion met his potential challengers, was London 1922. Capa started with 6 out of 6(!) and in the end he demonstrated brilliantly that he was the strongest player in the world: 1. Capablanca – 13 out of 15; 2. Alekhine – 11½ (both undefeated); 3. Vidmar – 11; 4. Rubinstein – 10½; 5. Bogoljubow – 9; 6-7. Réti and Tartakower – 8½ etc.

Here is another famous game by the Cuban on the theme 'bishop out of play' (like both *Game No.88* and *Game No.99*). As it was very superficially analysed, it generated a whole series of myths, which I would finally like to dispel.

Game 99

J.R.Capablanca-E.Bogoljubow

London 1922, 6th round

Ruy Lopez C91

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 d4 exd4?! (the first steps of theory: of course, 9...♗g4! is more accurate) **10 cxd4 ♗g4 11 ♗e3?!**

Returning the compliment: correct is 11 ♘c3! (Lasker-Bogoljubow, Mährisch Ostrau 1923).

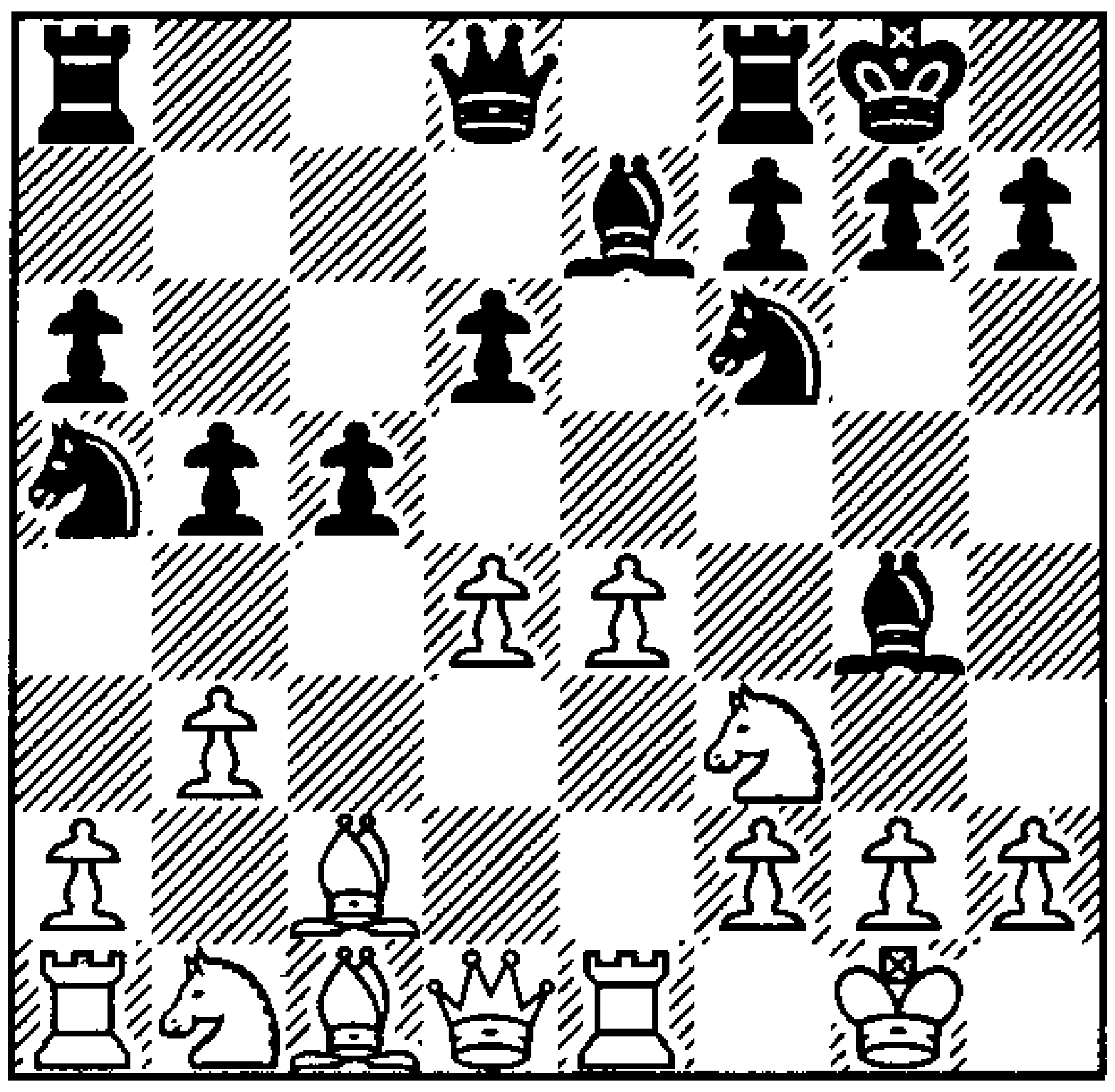
11...♘a5

11...d5 is also interesting, but we will skip through the opening since it is not the main content of this game.

12 ♗c2 ♘c4 (12...c5!?) **13 ♗c1**

Harmless is 13 ♘bd2?! ♘xe3 14 ♖xe3 c5 15 ♕e1 ♘d7 16 h3 ♗h5 17 dxc5 ♘xc5 with the initiative for Black (Yates-Capablanca, New York 1924).

13...c5 14 b3 ♘a5 (14...♘b6!?)



15 ♗b2?!

Much stronger is Fischer's plan 15 d5! ♘d7 16 ♘bd2 ♗f6 17 ♖b1, which was tested in the games Fischer-Korchnoi (Stockholm interzonal 1962), Korchnoi-Portisch (Sousse interzonal 1967), Tal-Gligoric (Belgrade 7th matchgame 1968) and Bronstein-Smyslov (Petropolis interzonal 1973).

Now, however, Black is able to exchange the formidable 'Spanish' bishop and to gain the advantage of the two bishops.

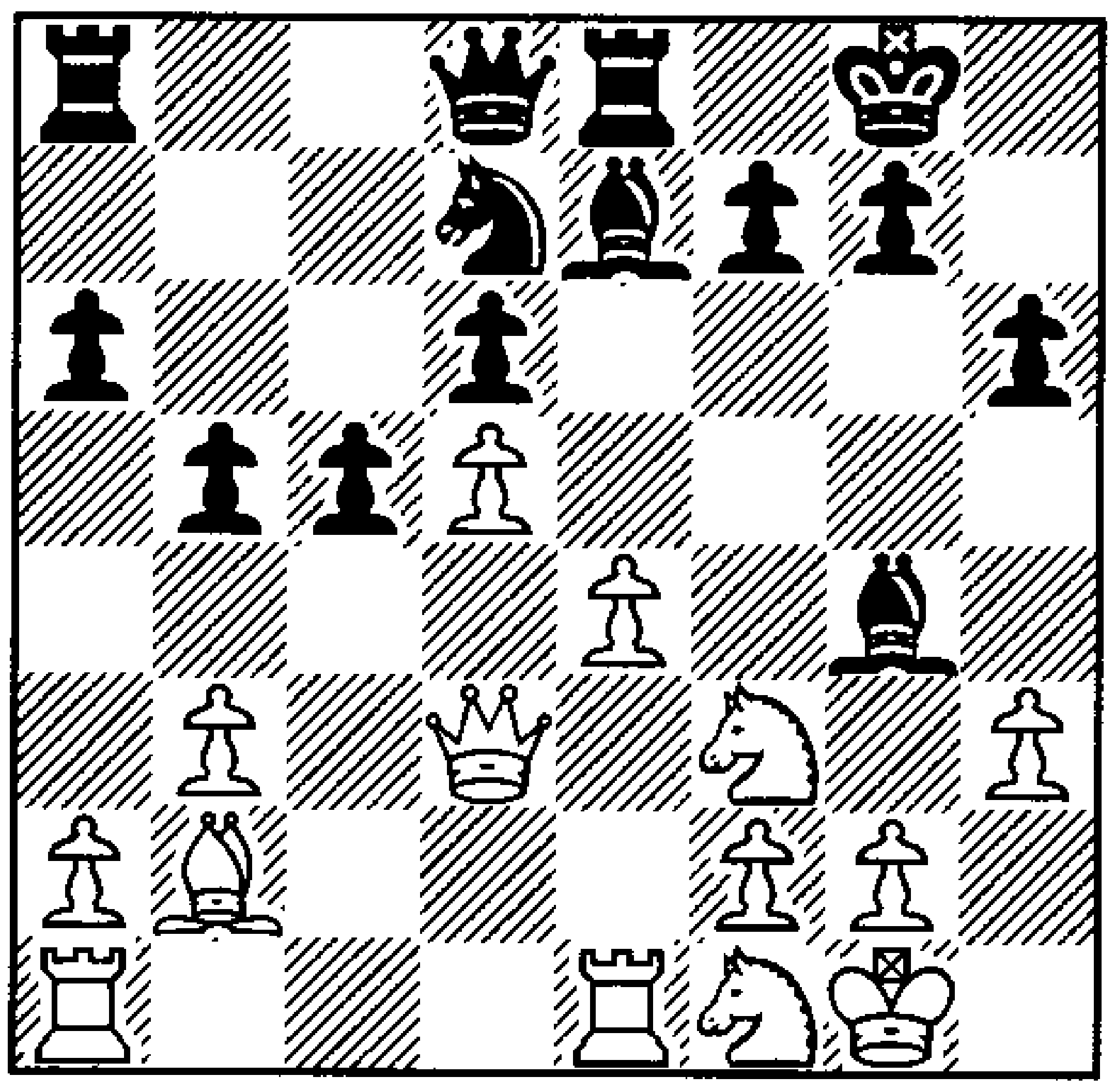
15...♘c6! 16 d5 ♘b4 17 ♘bd2 ♘xc2 18 ♕xc2 ♖e8

'18...♘d7 at once would have been better.' (Capablanca) In any event, Black has achieved an excellent position from the opening in the spirit of the Modern Benoni: no problems!

19 ♕d3

Capa suggested 19 a4, in order after 19...b4?! to create a 'hole' for the knight at c4. But 19...♘d7 20 ♕d3 ♕b6 was possible, with a complicated game.

19...h6?! (again 19...♘d7! is better) **20 ♘f1** (in my opinion, the immediate 20 h3!? is more energetic) **20...♘d7 21 h3**



21...♗h5?!

'This is the turning point of the game. Black should have taken the knight with the bishop and then played ...♗f6. Failure to do this was the cause of his defeat.' (Capablanca) A typically categorical statement from the 'epoch of the titans': all simple and understandable!

Of course, it was quite unnecessary to hold on to the bishop, and by 21...♗xf3! 22 ♕xf3 ♗f6 Black would have achieved the dream of any Modern Benoni devotee. However, I cannot agree with Capablanca's conclusion: in my view the move 21...♗h5 is double-edged and does not yet spoil anything. It is another matter that Bogoljubow did not realise just how dangerous was his opponent's deep plan of cutting off the bishop.

22 ♘3d2 ♗f6 23 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 24 a4 c4!?

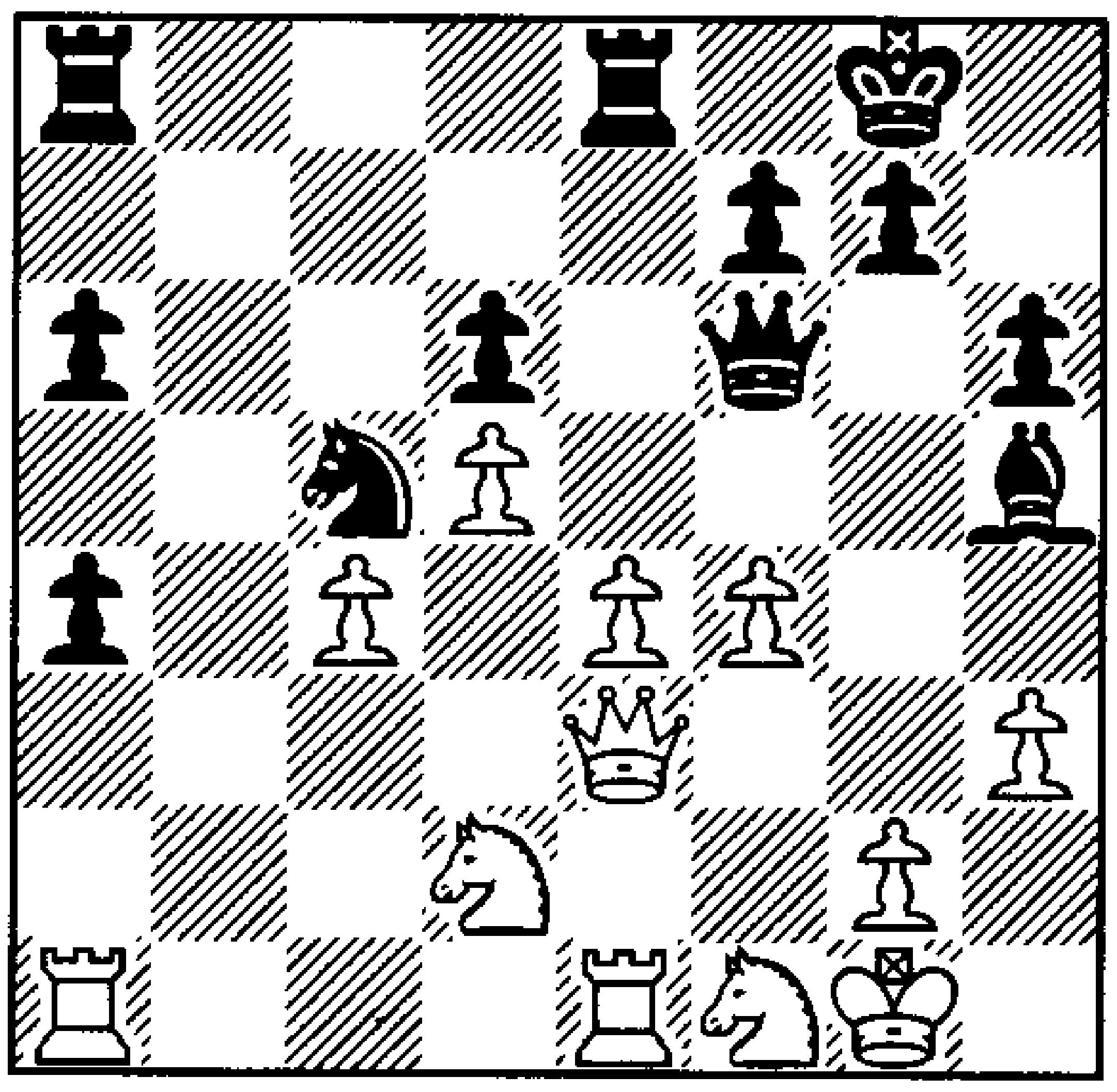
'This move gives Black a passed pawn, but on the other hand it helps White to carry out his purpose of blocking off the bishop at h5.' (Capablanca) Indeed, the move is very interesting and sharp: Bogoljubow, an incurable chess optimist, is playing for a win! Also unclear is 24...♘e5 25 ♕e3 g5!? followed by ...♗g6 – it is doubtful whether the weakening of the king can be exploited, and it would appear that Black has a perfectly good game.

25 bxc4 ♘c5 26 ♕e3 bxa4

It is strange that none of the commentators considered such an obvious move as 26...bxc4!? For example: 27 f3 ♘d3 28 ♖eb1 ♘b4! 29 e5 ♖xe5 30 ♘e4 ♖xe4 31 ♕xe4 ♗g6 32 ♕xc4 ♗xb1 33 ♖xb1 a5, or 27 ♖a3! ♗g6 28 f3 ♘d3 29 ♖b1 ♘f4 30 ♘xc4 ♖ac8 with sharp play. However, the capture on a4 is not yet a mistake.

27 f4!

The consistent implementation of the plan – Capablanca's iron principle.



27...♕e7?!

Charmed by the Cuban's easy play, the commentators did not notice 27...♗g6! Yet after 28 ♘g3 (28 e5 ♕d8!; 28 f5? ♗xf5) 28...♖ab8 29 f5 ♗h7 the f5-pawn is not supported by g2-g4 and Black's chances are certainly not worse: in the event of 30 ♖ab1? ♖xb1 31 ♖xb1 a3! White's position is altogether unenviable.

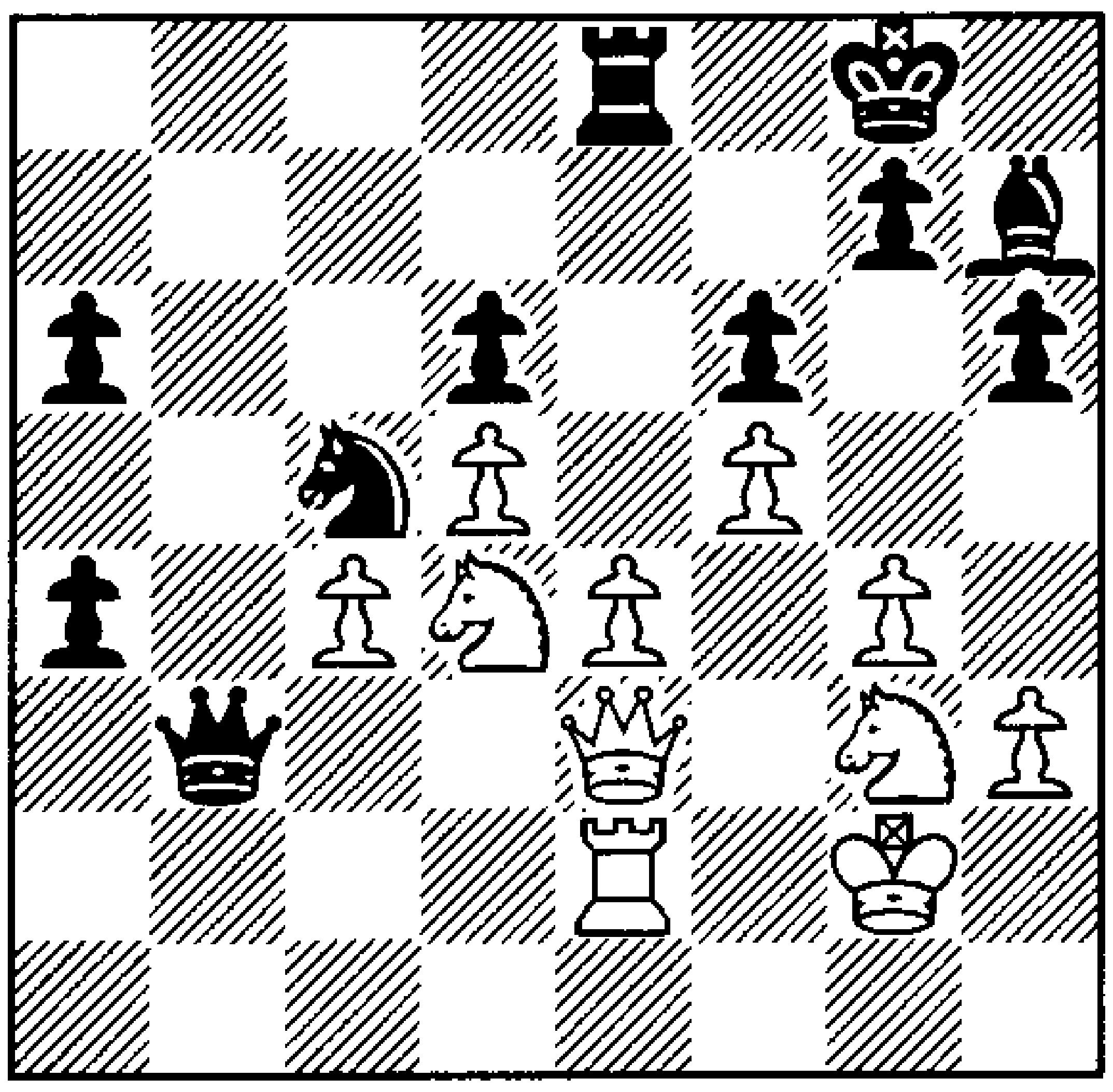
28 g4 ♗g6 29 f5

As in his game with Winter (*Game No.88*), Capa cuts off the bishop from the main battlefield. But there the bishop was altogether 'dead', whereas here it can after all come into play, and in addition Black has a strong passed pawn. And although from the preceding commentary it would appear that 'the goalkeeper is already on the ground and it only remains to shoot gently but accurately at the goal,' in my view the evaluation of the position is as yet far from clear.

29...♗h7 30 ♘g3 ♕e5! 31 ♔g2 ♖ab8 32 ♖ab1 f6

'The move prepares for the ultimate re-entrance of the bishop into the game via g8, f7 etc. The drawback is that it creates a hole at e6 for one of the white knights. However, there was not very much that Black could do in order to avoid the disadvantage from such a poor pawn formation.' (Capablanca) But why?! 32...♖b2 came into consideration, for example: 33 ♖e2 ♖xb1 34 ♘xb1 ♖b8 35 ♘d2 ♖b2 with counterplay.

33 ♘f3 ♖b2+ 34 ♖xb2 ♕xb2+ 35 ♖e2 ♕b3 36 ♘d4!



36...♕xe3?

'Practically forced, since he could not afford to play 36...♕xc4 because of 37 ♖c2 followed by ♘e6,' Capablanca writes in his manual (*A Primer of Chess*), overlooking 37...♕xd5 38 ♘e6 ♕b3! (there is also 38...♖xe6 39 dxe6 ♕xe6). Of course, 37 ♘e6! is stronger, but after 37...♖b8 the position is completely unclear.

Thus 36...♕xc4! was perfectly possible. The queens should have been retained for the additional reason that White's king is bad, and this was an additional chance for Black.

37 ♖xe3 ♖b8 38 ♖c3 ♔f7 39 ♔f3 ♖b2 40 ♘ge2 ♗g8 41 ♘e6!

It is now possible to talk of an advantage for White, although, as we will see, subsequently Bogoljubow could have resisted more tenaciously.

41...♘b3

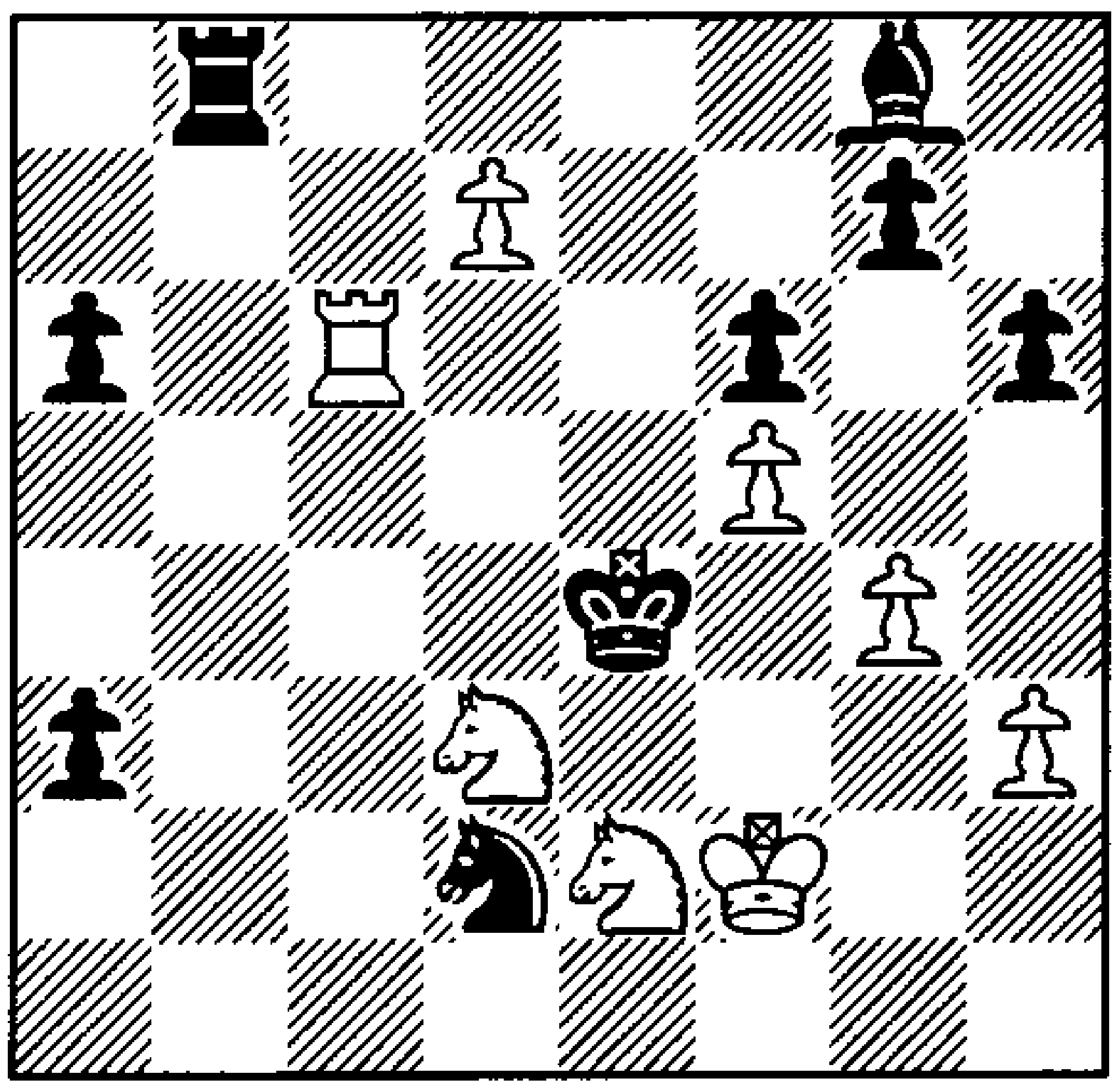
After 41...♘xe4 (41...♘xe6? 42 fxe6+ and 43 c5!) 42 ♔xe4 ♖xe2+ Capa gives 43 ♔d3 ♖h2 44 ♔d4 h5 45 c5!, but I would give 43 ♔d4 ♖d2+ 44 ♖d3 ♖xd3+ 45 ♔xd3 h5 46 ♔c3 hxg4 47 hxg4 ♗h7 48 ♔b4 g6 49 ♘d4 winning.

42 c5! dxc5 43 ♘xc5 ♘d2+ 44 ♔f2 (44 ♔e3? a3) **44...♔e7?**

Capa suggested 44...♘b1! 45 ♘xa4 ♘xc3 46 ♘xb2 ♘xe4+ 47 ♔e3 ♘d6 'with good chances to draw.' Tartakower added 45 ♖c4! a3 46 ♘e6 ♔e7! (but not 46...a2 47 ♖c7+ ♔e8 48 d6! with the threat of ♖e7 mate; *however, White wins only by the study-like 48...♗xe6 49 fxe6 ♖b8 50 ♖xg7 ♔f8 51 ♖f7+ ♔g8 52 ♖b7!! ♖xb7 53 d7 a1♕ 54 e7 ♖xd7 55 e8♕+ ♔g7 56 ♕xd7+ ♔g8 57 ♘d4! ♕a2+ 58 ♔g3 ♕f7 59 ♕c8+ ♔h7 60 ♕xa6 ♕c7+ 61 ♔g2 – G. K.*) 47 ♖c7+ ♔d6 48 ♖c6+ ♔e7.

But what next? If 49 ♘c5 Black is saved by 49...♘c3 50 d6+ ♔d8 51 ♔e3 (51 d7? ♘xe4+) 51...a2 52 ♖xa6 ♖xe2+ 53 ♔d3 a1♕! 54 ♖xa1 ♖a2, therefore there would seem to be only one way to win – 49 ♖xa6! ♗xe6 50 fxe6 ♘c3 51 ♖a7+ ♔f8 52 ♔e3 ♖xe2+ 53 ♔d3.

However, Black can try 48...♔e5!? (instead of 48...♔e7) 49 ♘6f4 ♘d2 50 ♘d3+ ♔xe4 51 d6 ♖b8 52 d7.



Analysis diagram

White still has some work to do in order to win: 52...♖d8 53 ♖d6 ♗d5 54 ♘b4! a5 55

♖e6+!! (a very difficult, study-like move!) 55...♗xe6 56 fxe6 axb4 57 e7, or 52...a2 53 ♖c8 a1♕ 54 ♘g3+! ♔xd3 55 d8♕+ ♕d4+ 56 ♕xd4+ ♔xd4 57 ♖xb8 etc.

Thus 44...♘b1! would have prolonged the game, whereas now it ends quickly.

45 ♔e1 ♘b1 46 ♖d3 a3? (another mistake, but 46...♔d6 would also not have saved Black – 47 ♘xa4 ♖b4 48 ♘ac3) **47 d6+ ♔d8 48 ♘d4! ♖b6 49 ♘de6+ ♗xe6 50 fxe6 ♖b8 51 e7+ ♔e8 52 ♘xa6 1-0**

After 52...a2 White wins with 53 ♘xb8 a1♕ 54 d7+.

And so, London 1922 further strengthened the beautiful legend about Capablanca's invincibility. But this tournament is also memorable for another reason. Here, for the first time in history, the champion invited a group of leading grandmasters to adopt the standard rules that he had worked out for world championship matches. And after detailed discussion, Capablanca, Alekhine, Rubinstein, Bogoljubow, Réti, Maróczy, Vidmar and Tartakower signed the so-called 'London agreement'. I will remind you of its main points:

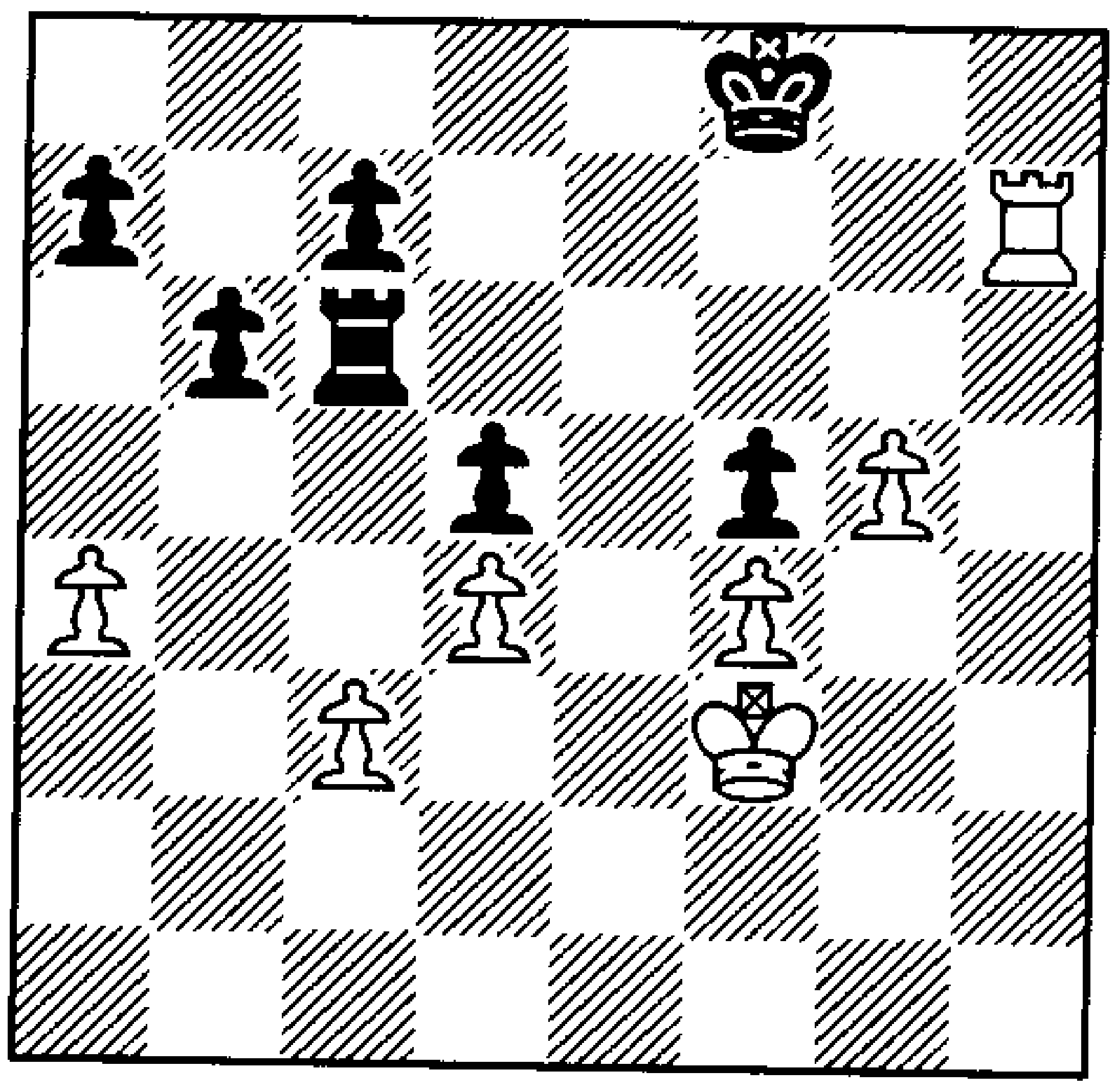
- the winner was to be the first to win six games, draws not counting;
- the time control was to be 40 moves in 2½ hours, play to proceed for five hours without a break;
- the champion must defend his title within a year after receiving a challenge, but he is not obliged to play a match if the prize fund does not reach $10,000 US in gold;
- out of the total prize fund the champion is to receive 20% as an appearance fee, and out of the remaining part the winner is to receive 60% and the loser 40%;
- if the champion has accepted a challenge, the challenger is to make a deposit of $500, three months before the match a further $500 (the champion is to contribute a similar amount), the guarantors subsidising the match – $3,000 and the balance before the start of the match;
- the date for the start of the match and the hours of play are to be specified by the champion;
- the champion has the right to postpone the match due to illness for a maximum of 40 days, after which if he is unable to play he loses his title;
- a new champion is obliged to defend his title under the same conditions.

Capablanca, as he put it, had decided to put an end to the arguments and misunderstandings that frequently arose during the times of Steinitz and Lasker due to a lack permanent rules for contesting the world championship. And although the agreement did not encompass all the strongest players (Lasker, Nimzowitsch and Spielmann were not in London), even so an important and historic precedent had been created.

It was another matter that in the 1920s-30s the 'golden wall' of $10,000 was not able to be surmounted by either Rubinstein or Nimzowitsch (they did not in fact play a match), or by Bogoljubow or Euwe (they only played for the title, after raising the prize fund stipulated for the champion). And only Alekhine managed to raise the required sum with some difficulty in 1927, in order to play the 'match of his life' strictly under the conditions of the London agreement. At that time Capa bitterly regretted that he had insisted on an unlimited match up to six wins, but it was already too late... However, this will be described later.

The next place for the meeting of the chess elite became New York 1924. The tournament, especially its second half, took the form of a fascinating race between Lasker and Capablanca. The ex-champion immediately took the lead and stormed ahead, whereas Capa started badly with a score of 2 out of 5, losing unexpectedly to Réti (*Game No.97*). There was nothing for it, and the Cuban began a spurt...

Game 100
J.R.Capablanca-S.Tartakower
New York 1924, 6th round

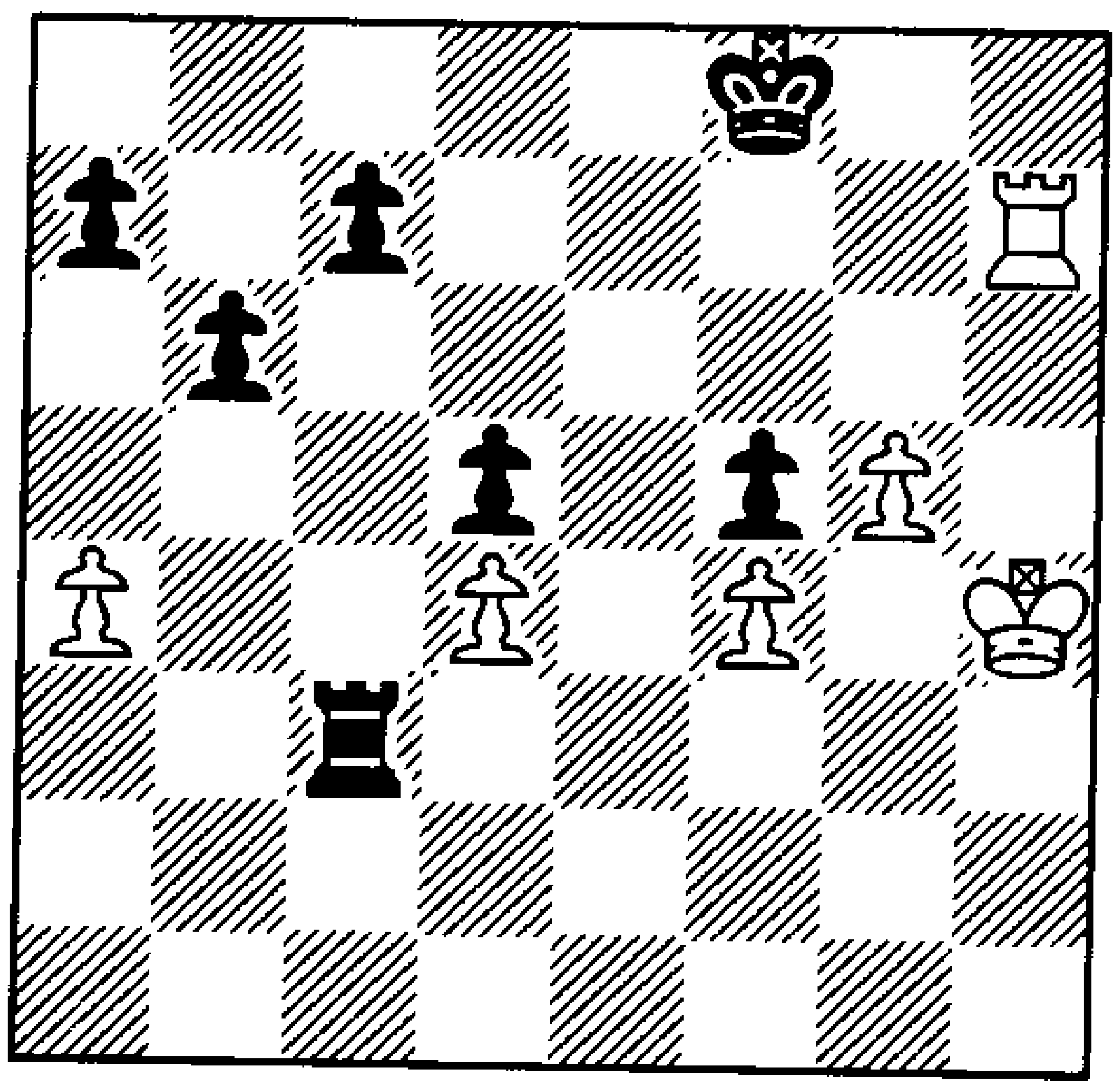


'At first sight it is not easy to assess the chances of the two sides. The black rook is about to invade the enemy position, and White must lose at least a pawn. However, the black king is "bad" and White has a strong passed g-pawn. And if the king can be included in the attack...' (Averbakh)

35 ♔g3!

'Decisive! White sacrifices material in order to obtain the classical position with king on f6, pawn on g6 and rook on h7, whereupon the black pawns tumble like ripe apples.' (Alekhine)

35...♖xc3+ 36 ♔h4!

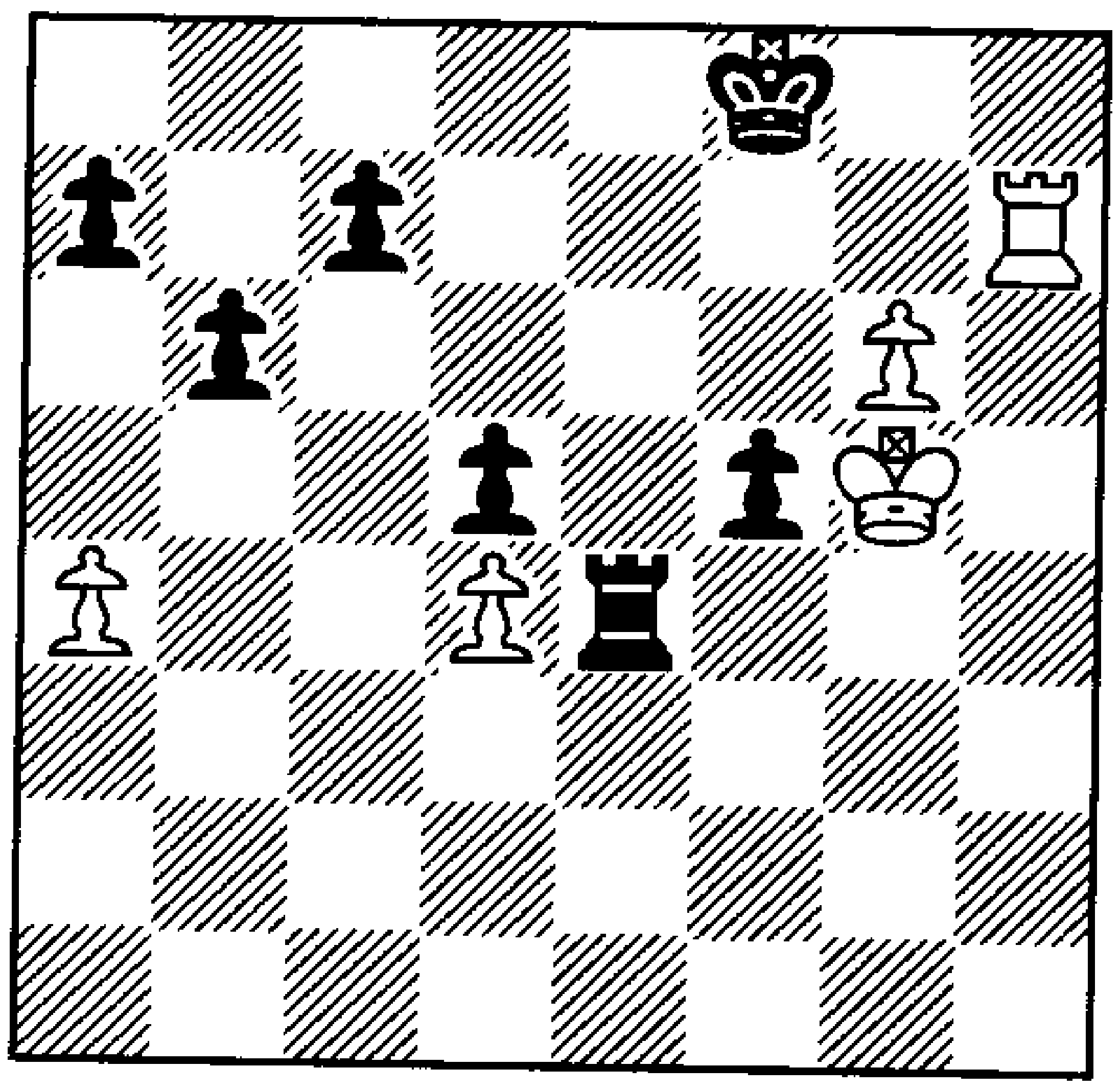


36...♖f3

'36...♖c1 37 ♔h5! ♖h1+ 38 ♔g6 does not help. After the loss of the f5-pawn White's two connected passed pawns easily decide matters.' (Levenfish, Smyslov)

37 g6! ♖xf4+ 38 ♔g5 ♖e4

The only chance. 'If 38...♖xd4, then 39 ♔f6 ♔e8 (39...♔g8 40 ♖d7 with mate) 40 ♖xc7 ♖xa4 41 g7 ♖g4 42 ♖xa7, winning the rook by 43 g8♕+ ♖xg8 44 ♖a8+ ♔d7 45 ♖xg8. Black did not manage to exploit his separated passed pawns.' (Spielmann)



39 ♔f6! (but not 39 ♔xf5? ♖xd4 with a draw) **39...♔g8 40 ♖g7+ ♔h8 41 ♖xc7 ♖e8 42 ♔xf5!**

'Again the simplest. 42 ♔f7 would not yet have been disastrous, because of 42...♖d8 etc.' (Alekhine)

42...♖e4 (42...a6 43 ♖a7 b5 44 a5 wins) **43 ♔f6! ♖f4+ 44 ♔e5 ♖g4 45 g7+! ♔g8**

Also hopeless is 45...♖xg7 46 ♖xg7 ♔xg7 47 ♔xd5 ♔f7 48 ♔c6 ♔e7 49 d5 ♔d8 50 ♔b7.

46 ♖xa7 (more accurate than 46 ♔xd5?!) **46...♖g1** (or 46...♖g5+ 47 ♔d6 and ♔c6) **47 ♔xd5 ♖c1 48 ♔d6 ♖c2 49 d5 ♖c1 50 ♖c7 ♖a1 51 ♔c6! ♖xa4 52 d6 1-0**

A classic ending!

Altogether at the finish of the first half Capa scored 4 out of 5, including a win over Bogoljubow. I will give this also quite well-known game, to demonstrate the relative strengths of the champion and one of the contenders for the throne, as well as the level of commentary at that time.

Game 101

E.Bogoljubow-J.R.Capablanca

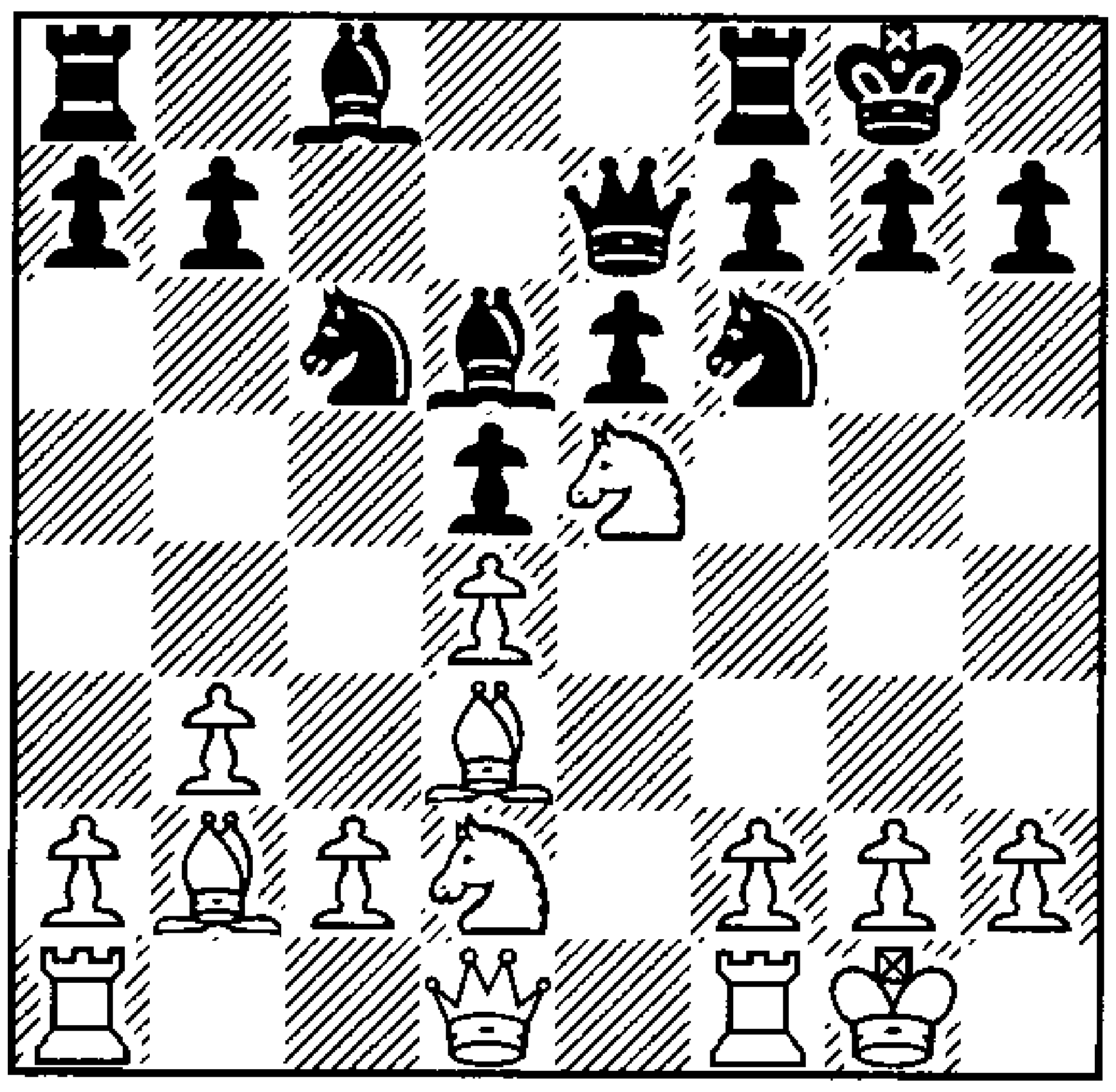
New York 1924, 9th round

Queen's Pawn Opening D05

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 d5 3 e3 e6 4 ♗d3 c5 5 b3 ♘c6 6 0-0 ♗d6 7 ♗b2 0-0 8 ♘bd2

8 a3! ♕e7 9 ♘e5 is more accurate, not allowing the following exchanging operation and retaining some initiative.

8...♕e7! (threatening both 9...e5, and 9...cxd4 10 exd4 ♗a3!) **9 ♘e5 cxd4 10 exd4**



10...♗a3!

Advantageously simplifying the position and weakening the enemy flank. This action demonstrates Capablanca's chess vision: he sees the entire board!

11 ♗xa3

Also possible is 11 ♕c1!? ♗xb2 12 ♕xb2 ♗d7 with equality. For the moment there is nothing terrible for White: Black simply has a comfortable position.

11...♕xa3 12 ♘df3 ♗d7 13 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 14 ♕d2?!

According to Alekhine, 'Here 14 ♕c1! ♕b4 15 ♕d2 ♕b6 16 ♘e5 was much to be preferred.'

14...♖ac8 15 c3?!

'To what purpose? 15 ♘e5 could very well have been played at once.' (Alekhine)

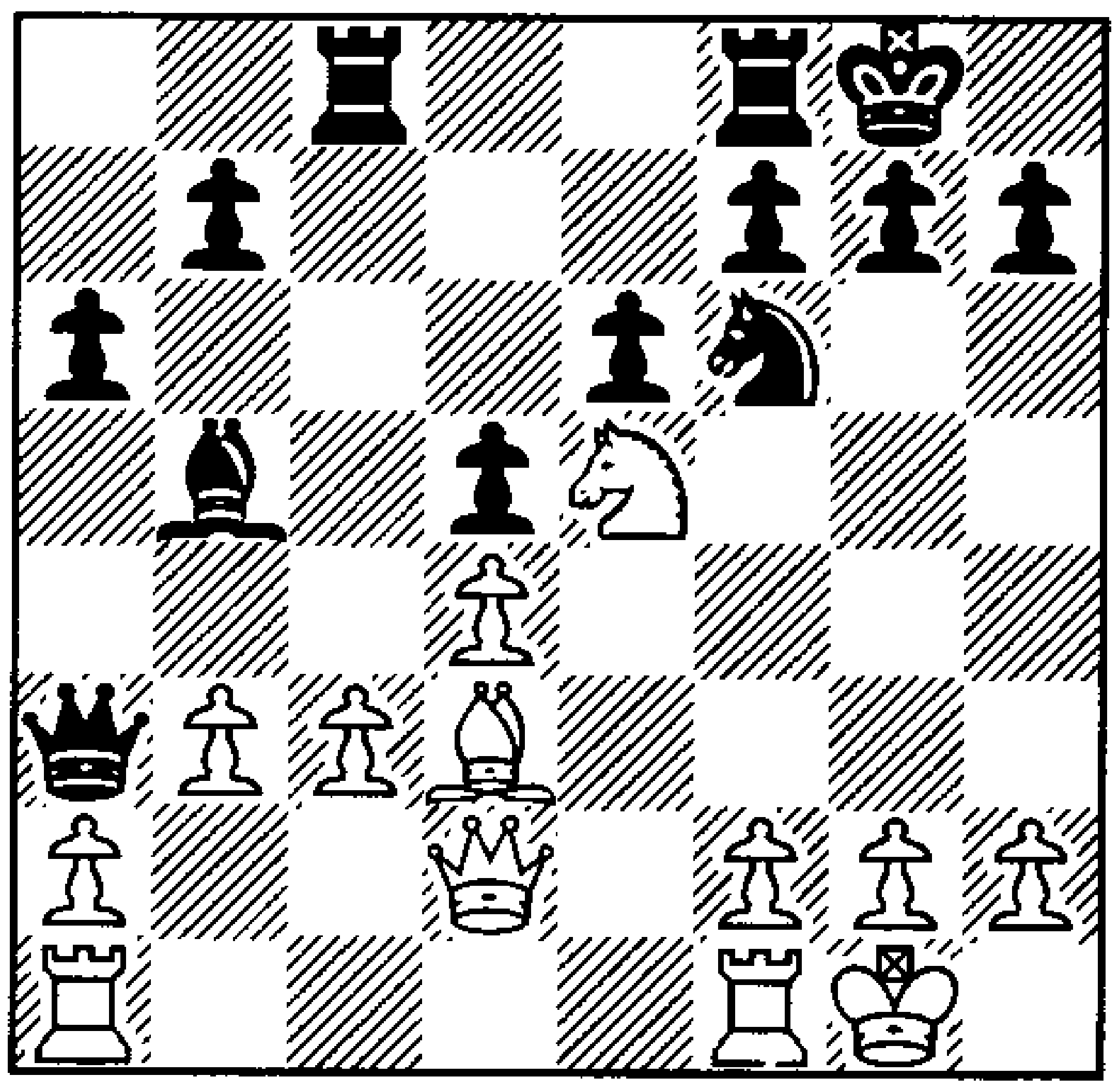
Bogoljubow's subsequent play reminds us of how much more professional present-day chess has become. Today one cannot imagine a grandmaster from the world's top ten (or perhaps even the top hundred) losing such a position with White, even against the world champion. It is amazing how great the gulf was in those days between the giants, driving chess forward (Lasker, Capablanca, Alekhine...) and the rest of the elite. Bogoljubow has a lost position literally within 10 moves!

15...a6

Alekhine attaches an exclamation mark to this move: 'Excellent! After the exchange of the bishop, now practically unavoidable for White, the knight will gain new and important squares for attack.'

But in my view, better is 15...♕a5!? 16 a4 (if 16 ♘e5, then 16...♗b5!) 16...♘e4 17 ♗xe4 dxe4 18 ♘e5 ♗d5 19 b4 ♕d8 20 a5 f6 21 ♘g4 with a rather complicated game – possibly Black stands very slightly better.

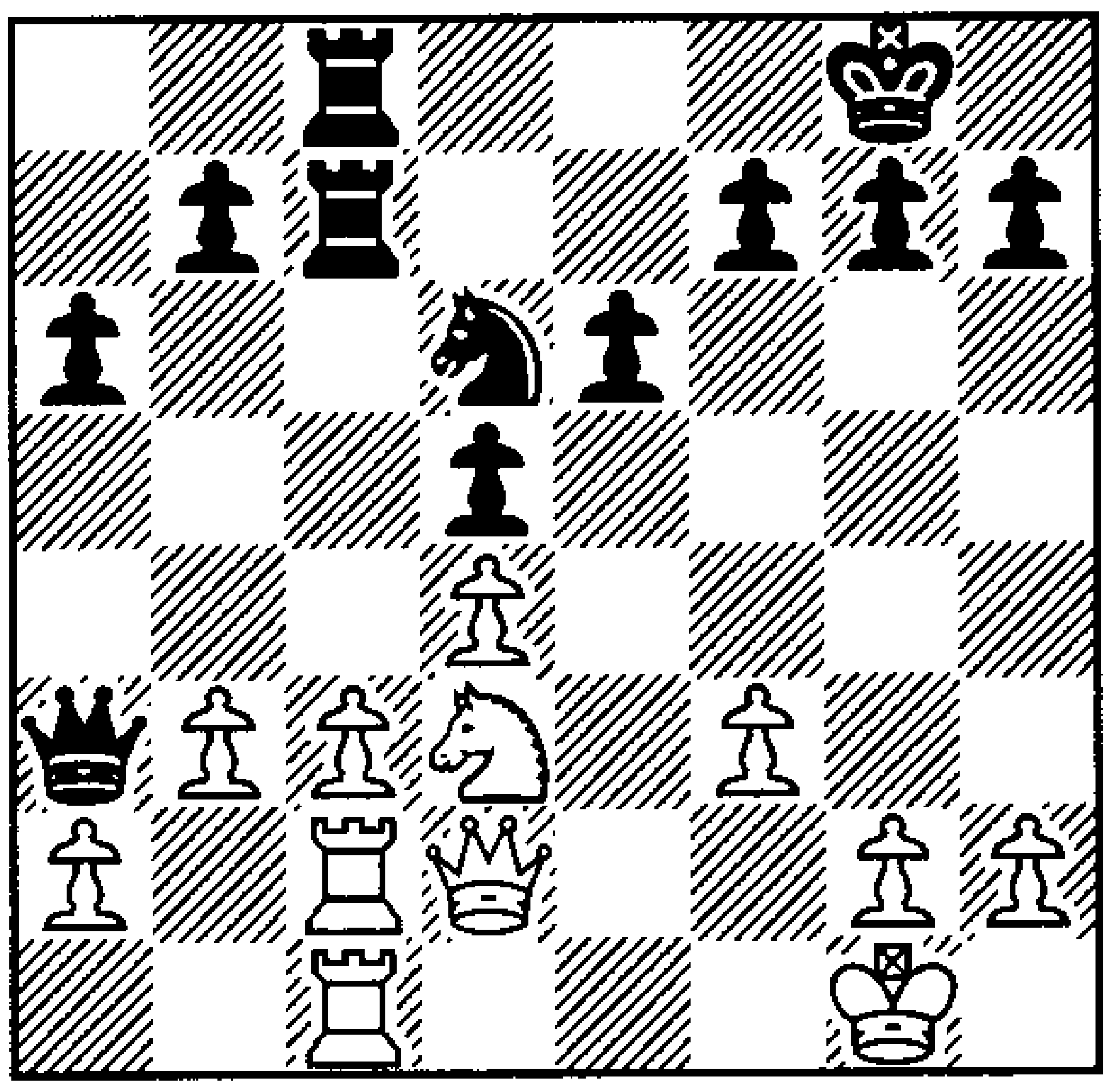
16 ♘e5 ♗b5



17 f3?

What for?! 'After 17 ♗xb5 axb5 etc. the opening of the a-file would have conduced to the benefit of Black.' (Alekhine) But for some reason none of the commentators mentioned a move which nowadays would be made in a second by any master – 17 c4! Simple and into the centre! Yes, after 17...dxc4 18 bxc4 White has hanging pawns, but these are a double-edged weapon, and both sides have chances...

17...♗xd3 18 ♘xd3 ♖c7 (beginning a siege of the c3-pawn) **19 ♖ac1 ♖fc8 20 ♖c2 ♘e8! 21 ♖fc1 ♘d6**



Now White is in trouble: he has been unable to advance c3-c4 and has been left with a chronic weakness.

22 ♘e5?!

'There is nothing to be gained for the knight at e5. 22 ♘c5! (22...b6 or 22...e5, 23 ♘a4 etc.) would have added to the difficulty of his opponent's reaping the benefit of his positional advantage.' (Alekhine) I think that the correct reply would be 22...♘b5!

22...♕a5! 23 a4?

A conclusive weakening – White concedes everything! 23 ♘d3 really was better.

23...♕b6! 24 ♘d3?

Of course, White's position is already bad, but why squander pawns?! 24 ♖b2 ♘f5 25 ♖cc2 f6 26 ♘g4 e5 etc. was nevertheless more tenacious.

24...♕xb3 25 ♘c5 ♕b6 26 ♖b2 ♕a7 27 ♕e1 b6 28 ♘d3 ♖c4 29 a5 bxa5 30 ♘c5 ♘b5 31 ♖e2 (allowing a spectacular finish) **31...♘xd4! 32 cxd4 ♖8xc5! 0-1**

The finish of New York 1924 was incredibly dramatic. In the second half Capablanca defeated Lasker and scored 8½ out of 10! But Lasker, despite this defeat, also contrived to score 8½ out of 10 and retained first place, ahead of Capablanca, Alekhine and Marshall – exactly as in St Petersburg 1914 (the results of the tournament are given on p.216).

Let us now move on to Russia, to the first Moscow international tournament of 1925. This was a grandiose project: the 10 leading Soviet players headed by the champion of the country Bogoljubow (who had actually been living in Germany since 1914 and took German nationality in 1927) against 11 leading foreign players headed by Capablanca and Lasker!

During those days in Moscow there was a real chess boom. Would Capablanca repeat his London triumph or would he again be thwarted by the evergreen Lasker? Their starting duel ended in a draw. Then, however, Bogoljubow, scoring 8 out of 9 against the Soviet masters whom he knew so well, unexpectedly interfered in the dispute of the kings. Whereas Capa made draws and very casually squandered his energy: on the free day he even travelled to Leningrad where he gave a tough simultaneous display (and, incidentally, lost to the 14-year-old Botvinnik – that was their first meeting!). As a result, after suffering sensational defeats against Ilyin-Genevsky and Verlinsky, he fell catastrophically behind the leader – Bogoljubow.

Their individual game took place three rounds before the finish. Capablanca was two points behind and he only had two games left (he had a bye in the last round). And the champion decided to play sharply, and to go in for an uncustomary risk: it was practically impossible to catch Bogoljubow, but... prestige!

Game 102
J.R.Capablanca-E.Bogoljubow
Moscow 1925, 19th round
Queen's Gambit Accepted D21

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 dxc4 4 e4 c5?! (nowadays 4...b5 is considered acceptable) **5 ♗xc4!**

In the 17th round Capablanca played 5 d5 against Zubarev, but after 5...exd5 6 exd5 ♘f6 7 ♗xc4 ♗d6 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♗g5 ♗g4 10 ♘c3

♘bd7 he did not achieve anything (although in the end he won spectacularly, gaining the first brilliancy prize!).

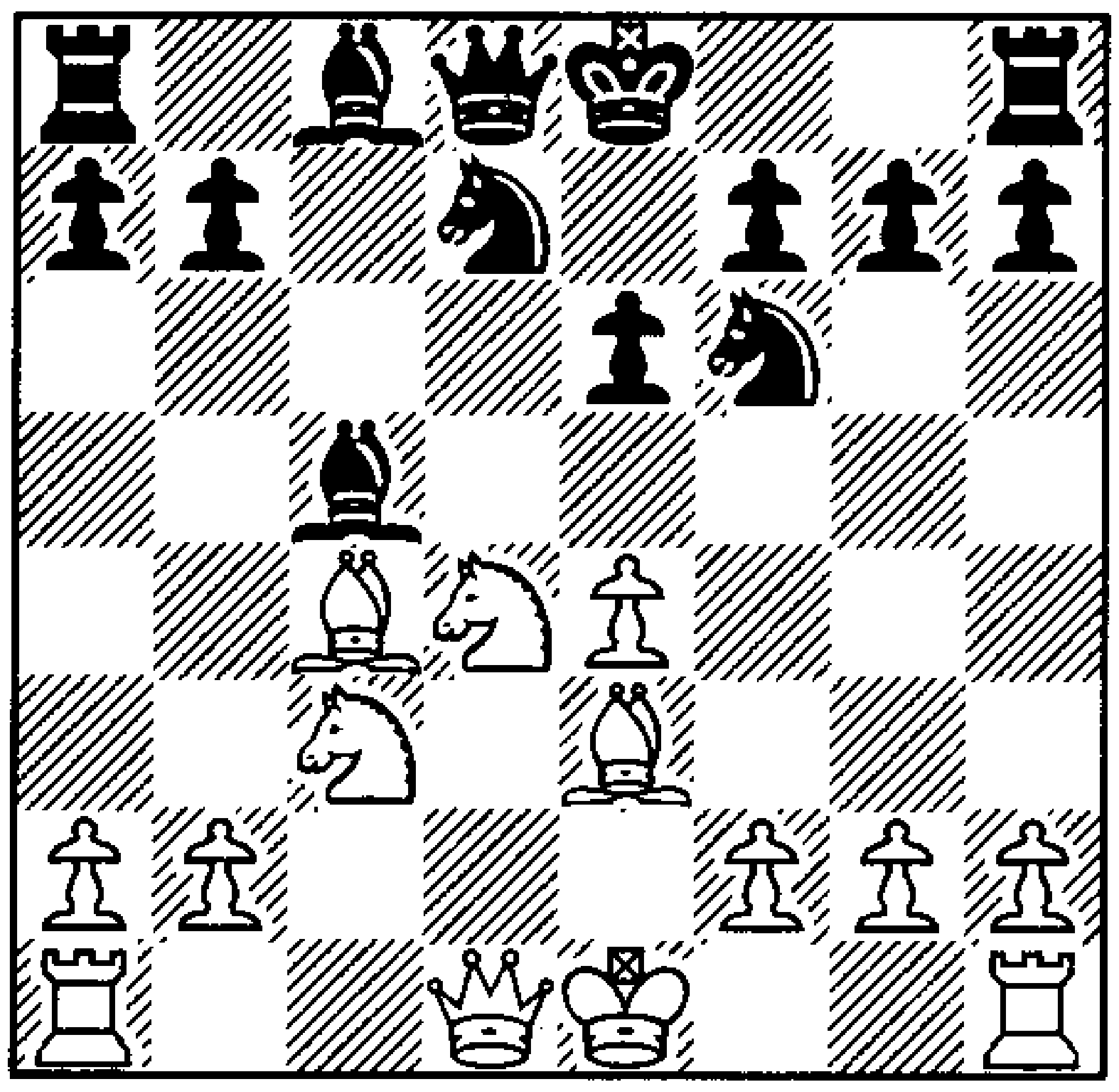
5...cxd4 6 ♘xd4 ♘f6 7 ♘c3 ♗c5

It is known that after 7...♗e7, 8 e5 ♘d5 9 ♕g4 is unpleasant, while after 7...e5 – 8 ♘db5 ♕xd1+ 9 ♔xd1 ♘a6 10 ♗e3!, and if 10...♘g4, then 11 ♗xa7! ♖xa7 12 ♘xa7 ♘xf2+ 13 ♔e2 ♘xh1 14 ♘xc8 ♗c5 15 ♖xh1 0-0 16 ♗xa6 bxa6 17 ♘a4 wins.

8 ♗e3 ♘bd7?!

Bogoljubow provokes his opponent into sacrificing a piece, since, by his own admission 'after lengthy thought I could no longer find an adequate defence for Black' (such was then the level of theory outside of the classical Queen's Gambit!): 8...e5? 9 ♘db5, 8...♘c6? 9 ♘xc6 ♕xd1+ 10 ♖xd1 (10...♗xe3? 11 ♖d8 mate), 8...♗xd4 9 ♗xd4 0-0 (or 9...♘c6) 10 ♗c5!, or 8...0-0 9 0-0 ♘bd7 10 ♕e2 ♘e5 (10...♕e7!) 11 ♖fd1! with an obvious advantage to White.

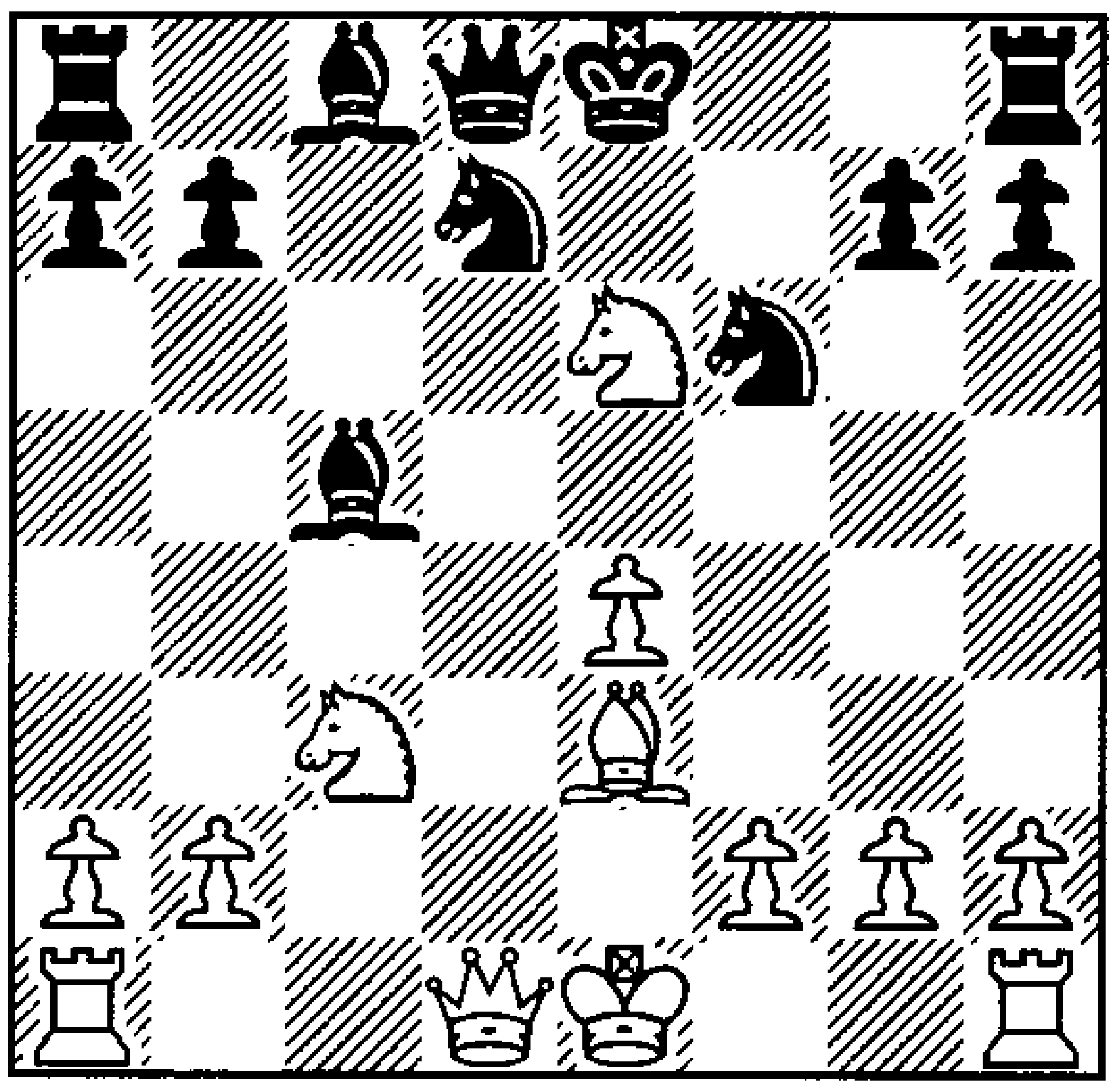
But after 8...0-0 Capablanca suggested 9 e5 ♘d5 10 ♗xd5 exd5 11 0-0 'with a decided advantage to White.'



9 ♗xe6!

'Considering himself morally obliged to play for a win at all costs, Capablanca made this move almost without thinking.' (Bogoljubow) Capa's intuition did not betray him! After 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♕e2 ♕e7 (but not 10...♘g4? 11 ♕xg4 ♘e5 12 ♕g3 ♘xc4 13 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 14 ♗xc5) White's initiative might have gradually evaporated.

9...fxe6 10 ♘xe6



10...♕a5?!

According to Bogoljubow, 10...♕b6 'would have given Black the possibility of achieving equality.' After this Capa gave a spectacular winning variation in the style of the old masters: 11 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 12 0-0 (threatening 13 ♘a4) 12...♕c6 13 ♖c1 (13 ♘d5? ♘cxe4 or 13...♘e6!? 14 ♖c1 ♕d7 Lasker) 13...♘cxe4 14 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 15 ♖e1! (15 ♗c5 ♕d5!) 15...♔f7 16 ♖c7+ ♔g6 17 ♗d4 ♕f4 18 ♖ee7! ♖d8 (*? – G. K.*) 19 ♖xg7+ ♔h6 20 ♖xh7+! ♘xh7 21 ♖xh7+! ♔xh7 22 ♕h5+ ♔g8 23 ♕g6+ ♔f8 24 ♗c5+.

However, even without a computer it is clear that after the simple 18...♖g8! there is no win for White: 19 ♗e3 ♕b4 20 ♖c5 ♗f5 etc. Therefore after 10...♕b6 other ways must be sought:

1) 11 ♘xg7+ ♔f7 12 ♘f5 with a rather dangerous attack: 12...♕xb2 13 ♖c1 ♗b4 14 ♗d4, or 12...♗xe3 13 ♘xe3 ♕xb2 14 ♖c1 ♘c5 15 0-0;

2) 11 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 12 ♖c1! would appear to be the most accurate:

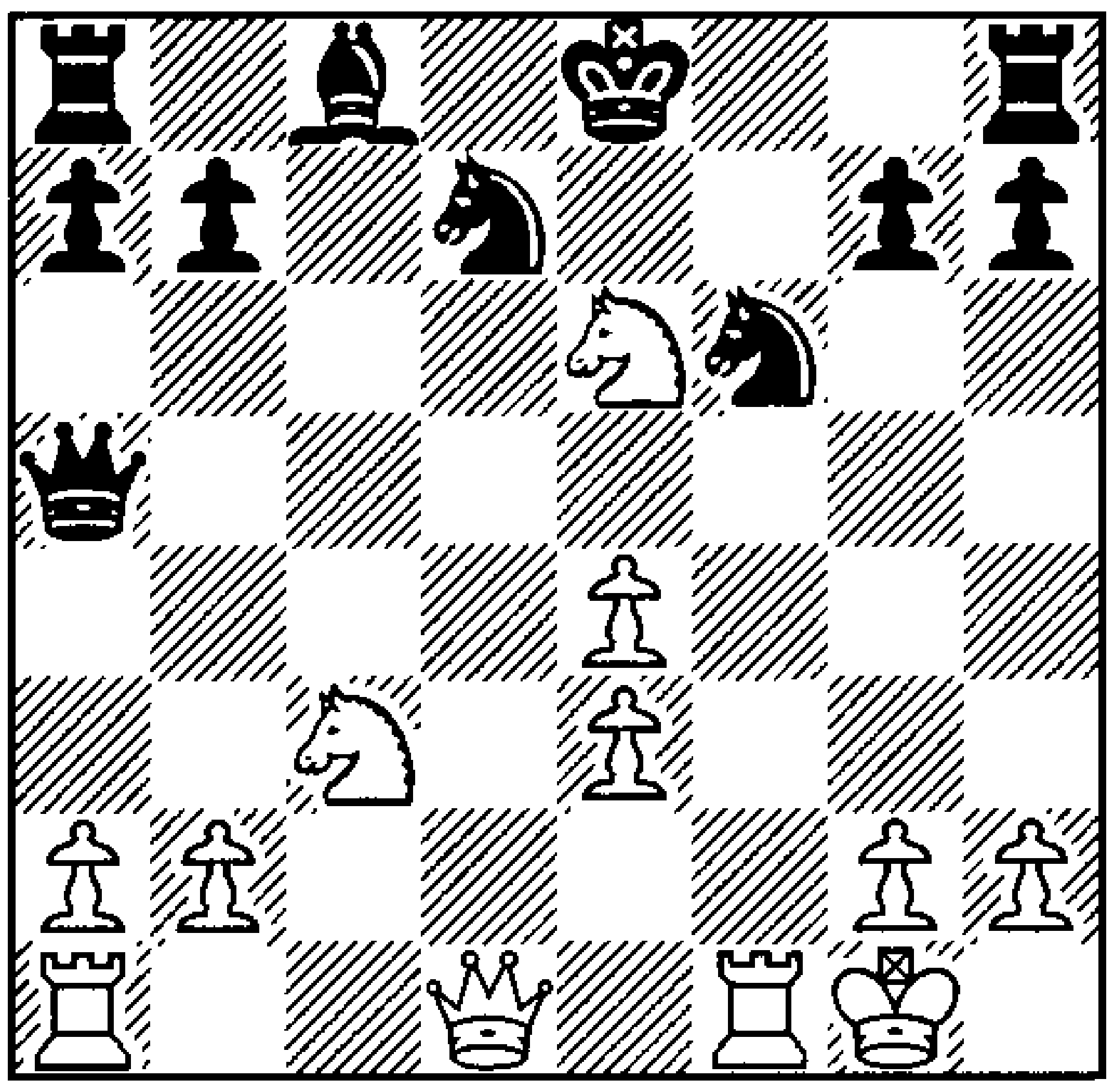
a) 12...0-0 13 ♘d5! ♘xd5 14 ♕xd5+ ♗e6 15 ♕xc5 ♕xb2 16 0-0 ♗xa2?! (slightly better is 16...♕xa2 17 ♕e5) 17 ♗d4 ♕b3 18 ♗xg7! ♔xg7 19 ♕g5+ ♔h8 20 ♕e5+ ♔g8 21 ♖c3 winning;

b) 12...♗d7 13 0-0 ♕a5 14 b4! ♕xb4 15 ♘d5, or 12...♗e6 (12...♗g4!? 13 f3 ♗e6 14

0-0) f3 0-0 ♖d8 14 ♘d5 ♘fxe4 15 ♕h5+ g6 16 ♕e5 ♖xd5 17 ♕xh8+ ♔d7 18 f3 ♘d6 19 ♕c3 and wins.

Of course, these variations are by no means exhaustive, but even from them it is clearly apparent that in the event of 10...♕b6 White would have had to display exceptional resourcefulness, to justify his bold sacrifice.

11 0-0! ♗xe3 12 fxe3



12...♔f7

‘Black had nothing better against the double threat of ♘xg7+ or ♘d5.’ (Bogoljubow) This is perfectly true: 12...♕b6? 13 ♘xg7+ ♔f7 14 ♘d5, 12...g6 13 ♘d5! ♘xd5 14 exd5 and ♕f3, or 12...♖g8 13 ♘d5 ♖b8 14 b4! ♕a3 15 ♘ec7+ ♔d8 (15...♔f7 16 ♕h5+; 15...♔f8 16 e5) 16 e5 ♘xd5 17 ♕xd5 ♕xe3+ 18 ♔h1 ♖h8 19 e6 are all winning for White.

The computer examines the more tenacious 12...♕e5 13 ♘xg7+ ♔d8!? (13...♔f7 14 ♖f5 ♕e7 15 ♘d5 ♕xe4 16 ♖f4 ♕e5 17 ♘h5 wins) 14 ♖f5 ♕e7 15 e5 ♘e8 16 ♘d5 ♕xg7 17 e6 ♘e5 18 ♕d4 ♘f3+ 19 ♖xf3 ♕xd4 20 e7+ ♔d7 21 exd4 ♖g8 with an unclear outcome after 22 ♖f8?! ♖g5 23 ♖xe8 ♔xe8 24 ♘c7+ ♔xe7 25 ♘xa8 ♗d7. But 22 ♖e1! puts everything in its place: 22...♖g6 (22...♖g5 23 ♘f6+) 23 ♖f8 ♖c6 24 ♖ef1 ♖e6 25 ♖1f7 b6 26 ♖xe8 ♔xe8 27 ♖xh7 and wins.

13 ♕b3 (13 ♖f5?! ♕b6!) **13...♔g6**

If 13...♕b6 White wins by 14 ♘g5+ ♔g6 15 ♕f7+ ♔xg5 (15...♔h6 16 ♘e6) 16 ♕xg7+ ♔h5 17 ♖f5+.

14 ♖f5!

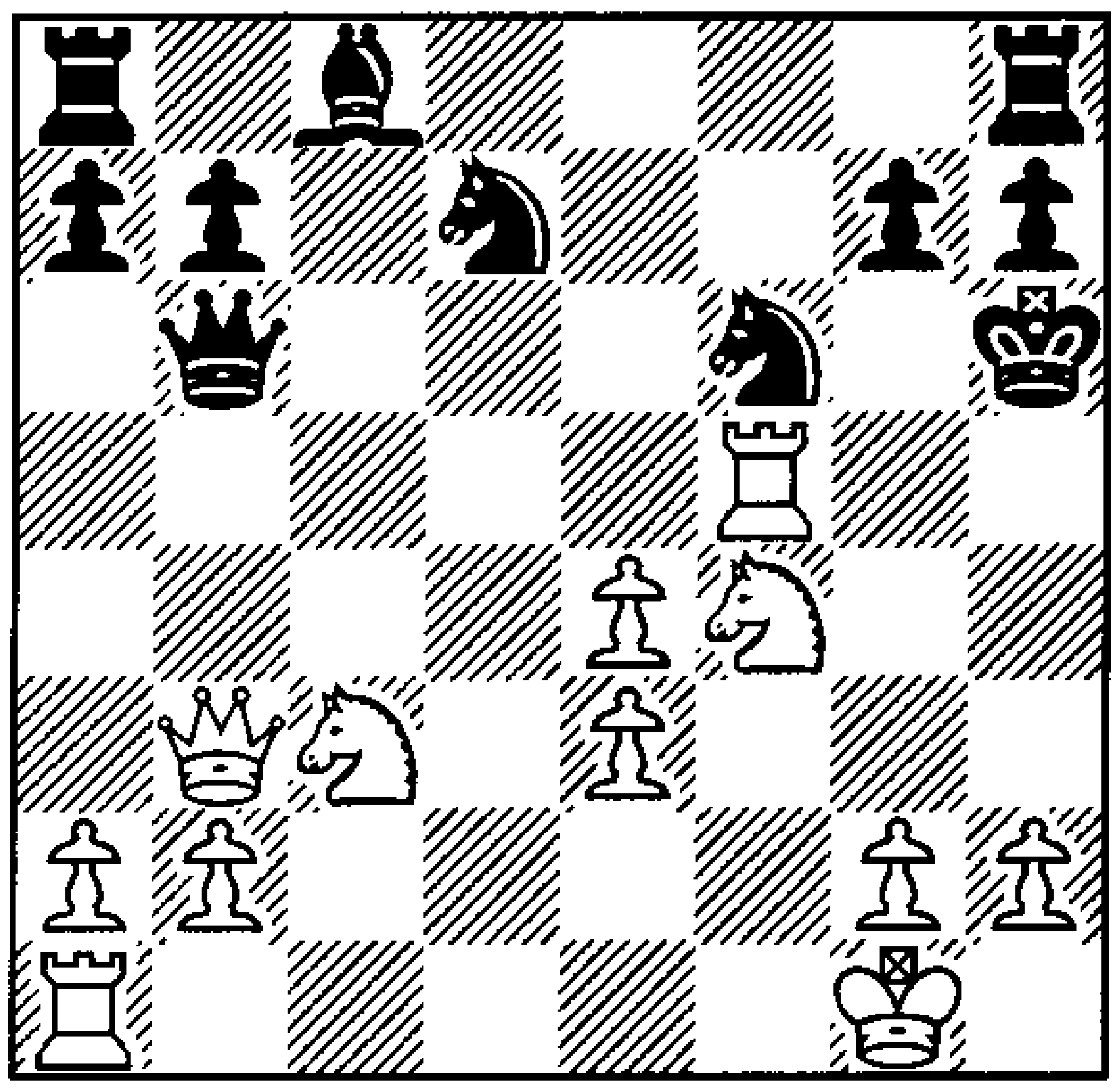
‘14 ♖f3 would probably win also, but the text move is better and should have brought about a quick ending.’ (Capablanca) Not so – 14 ♖f3? would have altogether thrown away the win: 14...♘e5 15 ♖g3+ ♔h6 16 ♘xg7 ♕b6! (but not 16...♖g8? 17 ♖f1! ♖xg7 18 ♖xf6+ ♖g6 19 ♕g8! ♕c5 20 h4 ♕e7 21 ♖gxg6+ hxg6 22 ♕h8+ ♕h7 23 ♕e8 ♕c7 24 ♖f8 ♔h5 25 ♖h8+ ♔g4 26 ♕b5 winning) 17 ♖f1 ♕xb3 18 ♖xf6+ (18 axb3 ♖f8) 18...♘g6 etc.

14...♕b6

If 14...♘e5, then 15 ♘d5!, for example: 15...♘xd5 16 ♖xe5 ♗xe6 17 ♖xe6+ ♘f6 18 e5, 15...♔h6 16 ♖xe5 ♘g4 17 ♘ec7, or 15...♗xe6 16 ♘f4+ ♔h6 17 ♕xe6 (17...♖he8? 18 ♖h5 mate!).

15 ♘f4+ ♔h6

An important, highly instructive moment for... the future contender for the crown.



16 g4?

An alarm bell: unable to withstand the tension, Capablanca commits an oversight. And yet happiness was so possible, so close – 16 ♕f7! with the threat of ♖h5+ and mate. ‘Of course, the world champion saw this natural attacking move, but he did not bother to calculate the resulting complicated and difficult variations, deciding that the win would be achieved more simply with the move in the game.’ (Panov)

Again this leaning towards simplicity! And yet the variations after 16 ♕f7! are in fact by no means so 'complicated and difficult':

1) 16...g5 17 ♘e6! ♖g8 (17...♕xe3+ 18 ♔h1 is also hopeless) 18 ♖f3 g4 19 ♖xf6+ with a rapid mate, although Bogoljubow's suggestion will also do: 17 ♖xg5!? ♕xe3+ 18 ♔h1 ♔xg5 19 ♕g7+ ♔xf4 20 ♖f1+ ♔e5 21 ♕e7+ ♔d4 22 ♖d1+ ♔c4 23 ♕e6+ ♔c5 24 b4+ ♔xb4 25 ♕b3+ ♔c5 26 ♕b5 mate;

2) 16...♕xe3+ 17 ♔h1 g6. Here Panov recommended 18 ♖xf6 ♘xf6 19 ♕xf6 ♖e8 20 ♘cd5 ♕f2 (*but not 20...♕xe4? 21 ♕b4+ ♔g7 22 ♘f6 ♕e5 23 ♘xe8+ ♕xe8 24 ♖e1 – G. K.*) 21 h4 'with a winning attack', but after 21...♗d7! nothing of the sort is apparent.

On the other hand, White wins without difficulty after 18 ♘e6! ♖g8 (18...♘h5 19 g4; 18...gxf5 19 ♕g7+ ♔h5 20 ♘e2!) 19 ♘d5 (19 ♖f4!? g5 20 ♖f3) 19...♕xe4 20 ♖xf6 ♘xf6 21 ♘xf6 ♕xe6 22 ♘xg8+ ♔g5 23 ♕xh7 ♕e2 24 ♕h6+ ♔f5 25 ♕f8+ ♔g5 26 ♖f1;

3) 16...g6 17 ♘e6! ♕xe3+ (17...♖g8 18 ♖f3!) 18 ♔h1 transposing into the previous variation, although also acceptable is 17 g4!? ♕xe3+ 18 ♔g2! gxf5 (18...♘xe4 19 ♘e6!; 18...♘xg4 19 ♖h5+ gxh5 20 ♕xh5+ ♔g7 21 ♕xg4+ ♔f8 22 ♘e6+ ♔e8 23 ♕h5+ ♔e7 24 ♘d5+) 19 g5+ ♔xg5 20 ♕g7+ ♔xf4 21 ♖f1+ ♔e5 22 ♕e7+ ♔d4 23 ♖d1+ ♔c4 24 ♕e6+ ♔c5 25 b4+ ♔xb4 26 ♕b3+ ♔c5 27 ♕b5 mate (Capablanca). I should like to add 18...♕d2+ 19 ♔h1 ♘xg4 (19...gxf5 20 g5+ ♔xg5 21 ♕g7+ ♔xf4 22 ♕g3 mate) 20 ♖h5+! gxh5 21 ♕xh5+ ♔g7 22 ♕xg4+ ♔f8 23 ♕f5+ ♔e7 24 ♕g5+ ♔f7 25 ♘cd5 winning.

16...g5!

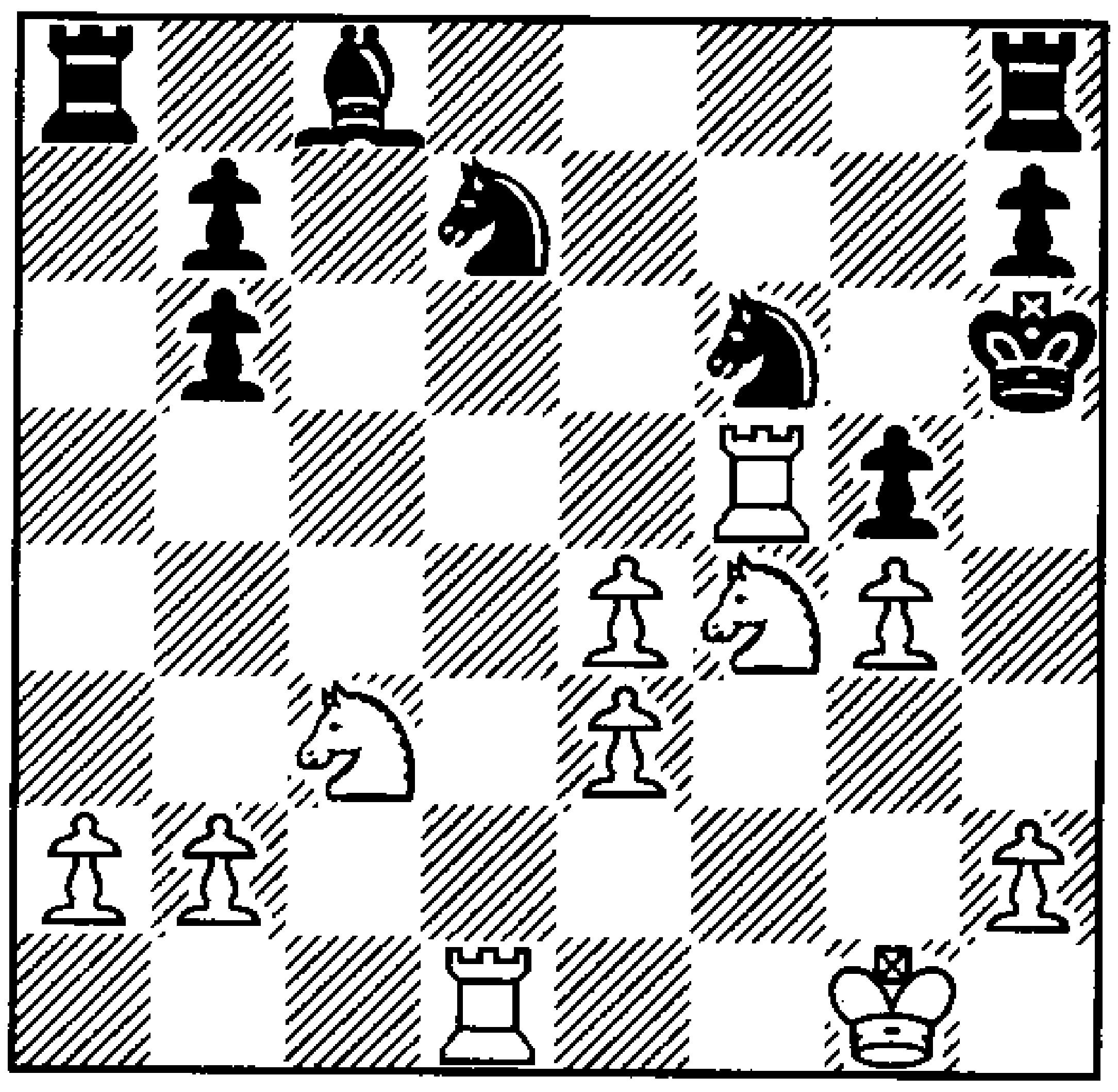
An unforeseen reply, forcing the exchange of queens. White's attack peters out, and he has to think about how to save the game.

17 ♕xb6!

It is easy to see that everything else is worse: 17 ♕f7? ♖f8!, 17 ♘b5? ♘c5, 17 ♕c4? ♘xg4 18 ♘fd5 ♕xb2, while if 17 ♕d1? or 17 h4?, then 17...♕xe3+ 18 ♔f1 gxf4 etc.

17...axb6 18 ♖d1!

'Although Black is a piece ahead he still has trouble to get out of this position without serious loss.' (Capablanca) After stumbling on easy ground, the Cuban begins plays very cunningly, 'mixing things', I would say, in the style of Tal. 18 ♘fd5?! ♘xg4 19 h3 ♘ge5 20 ♖d1 ♘g6 etc. was too depressing.



18...♖g8?

Bogoljubow wants to win in comfort. After 18...gxf4 19 g5+ ♔g7 (but not 19...♔g6? 20 ♖d6) 20 gxf6+ ♘xf6 21 ♖g5+ (21 ♖xf4? ♖a5!) 21...♔f7 22 exf4 White, as Capablanca expressed it, 'would have had to fight hard to obtain a draw' – say, after 22...h6 23 ♖b5 (23 ♖g3 ♘h5) 23...♖g8+ 24 ♔f1.

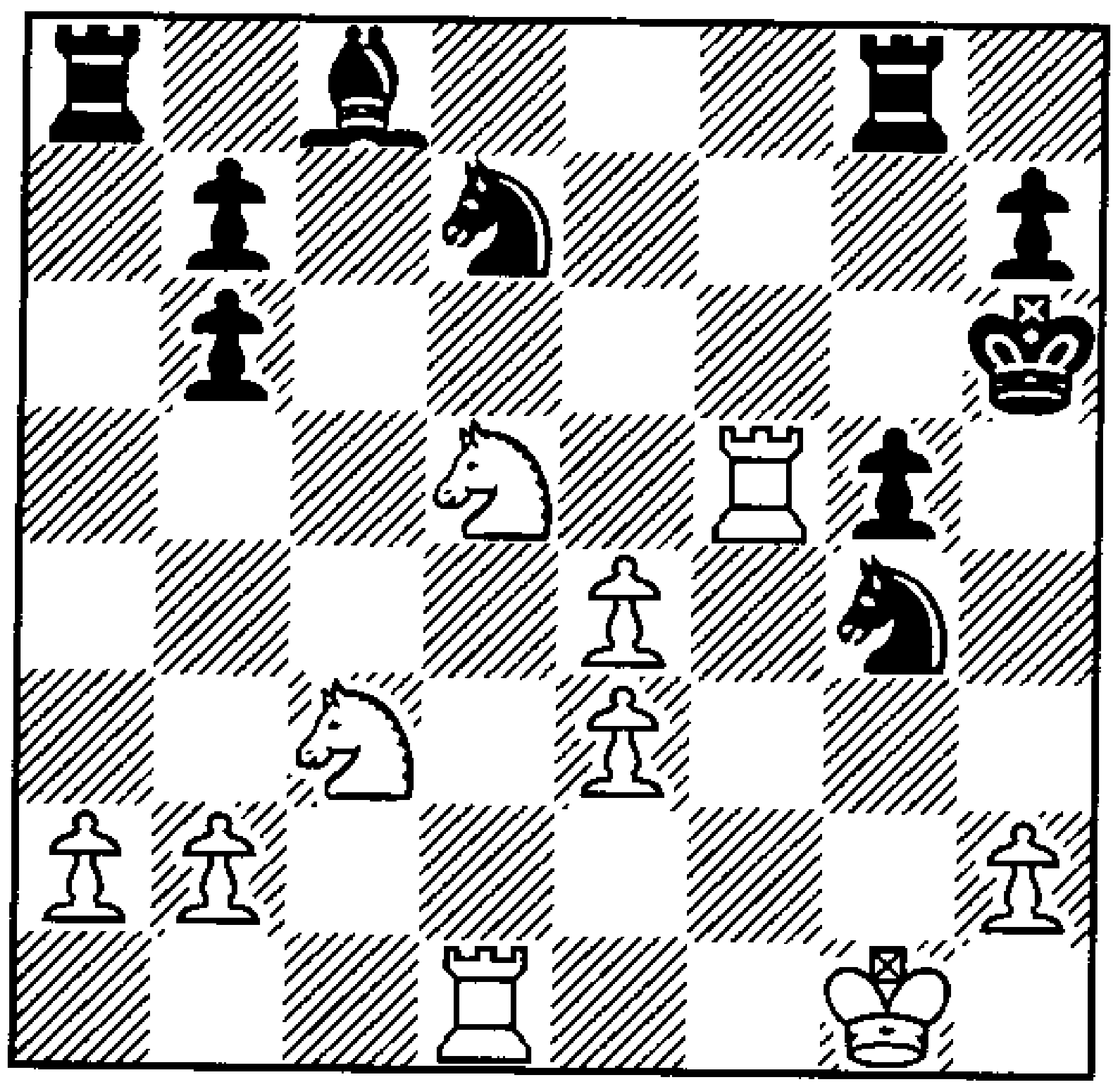
But even stronger was 18...♖a5! 19 ♘fd5 (19 ♘h3 ♘xg4) 19...♘xg4 20 ♖df1 ♖e8 21 b4 ♖a3 winning. I think that Alekhine would have found his way through these complications and would not have forgiven White for mistakes such as 16 g4?

19 ♘fd5! ♘xg4?

Mistakes come in pairs... Black decided that after the exchange of queens there was no longer any play for mate, and he left too many white pieces in the vicinity of his king.

'If 19...♖g6, then 20 ♘e7 ♘c5 (*21...♖g7!? – G. K.*) 21 ♖d8! etc.' (Bogoljubow) But the simple 19...♘xd5! would have forced the opponent to fight for a draw: 20 ♖fxd5 (20 ♖dxd5?! ♘f8 21 ♖f6+ ♘g6 22 h3 ♖a6; 20 exd5?! ♖f8 21 ♖df1 ♖xf5 22 ♖xf5 ♔g6) 20...♘f6 21 ♖d6 ♖g6 22 h3 b5 23 ♖b6 ♘xg4 24 ♖xg6+ hxg6 25 hxg4 b4 26 ♘d5 ♖xa2 27

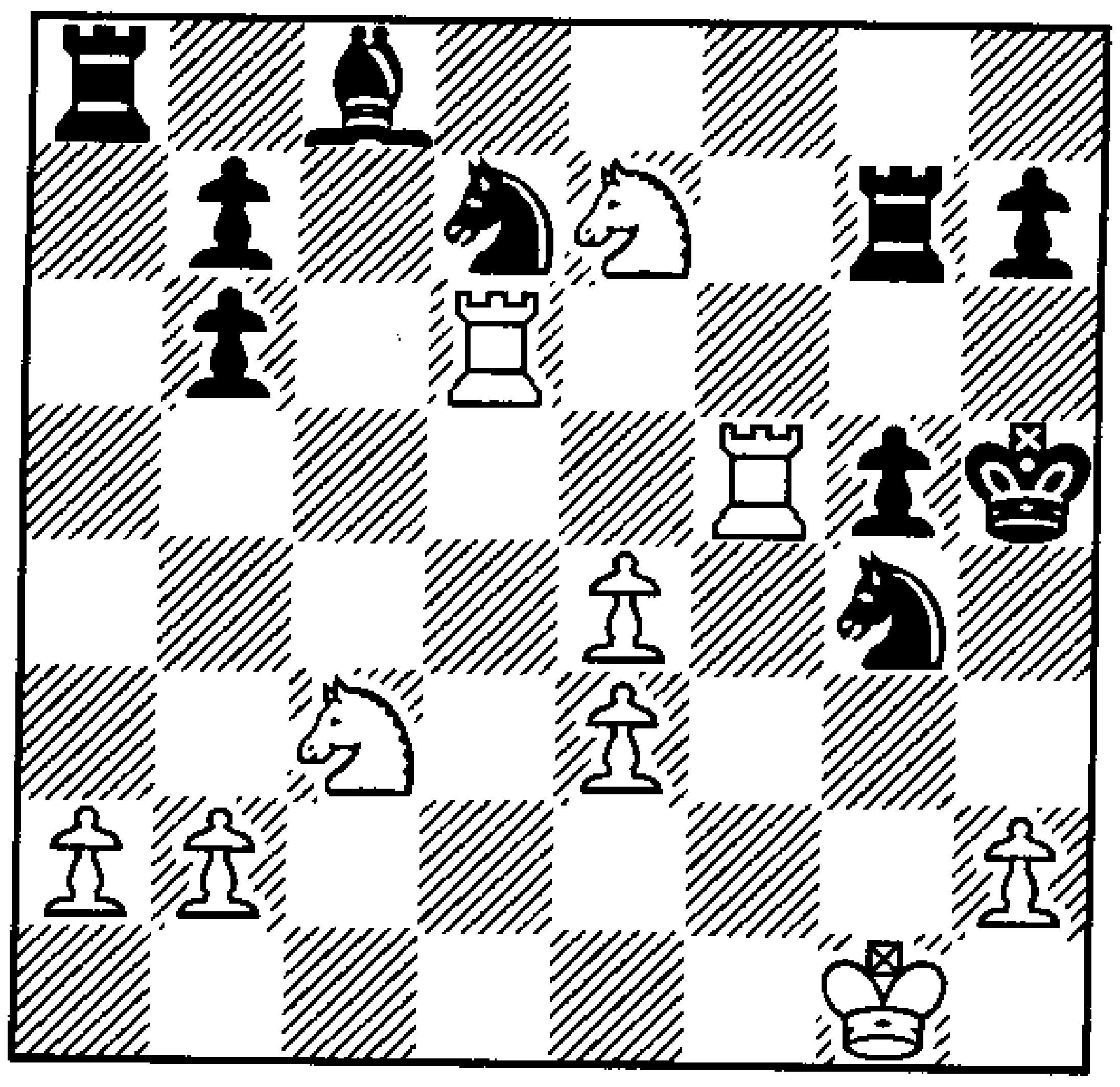
♘xb4 (but not 27 ♘f6?! ♔g7 28 e5 ♖xb2), or 20 ♘xd5 ♘c5 21 ♖f6+ ♔g7 22 ♖df1 ♗xg4 23 ♖f7+ ♔h6 24 ♘f6 ♗e6 25 ♘xg8+ ♖xg8 etc.



20 ♘e7! (unexpectedly White's attack flares up with renewed strength) **20...♖g7**

Perhaps the best defence was 20...♖g6!? 21 ♘xc8 ♘c5 22 ♘xb6 ♖xb6 23 ♖xc5 ♖xb2 with drawing chances.

21 ♖d6+ ♔h5



22 ♖f3!

'A very strong move.' (Bogoljubow)

22...♘gf6 (if 22...♘ge5?, then 23 ♖h6+!) **23 ♖h3+!**

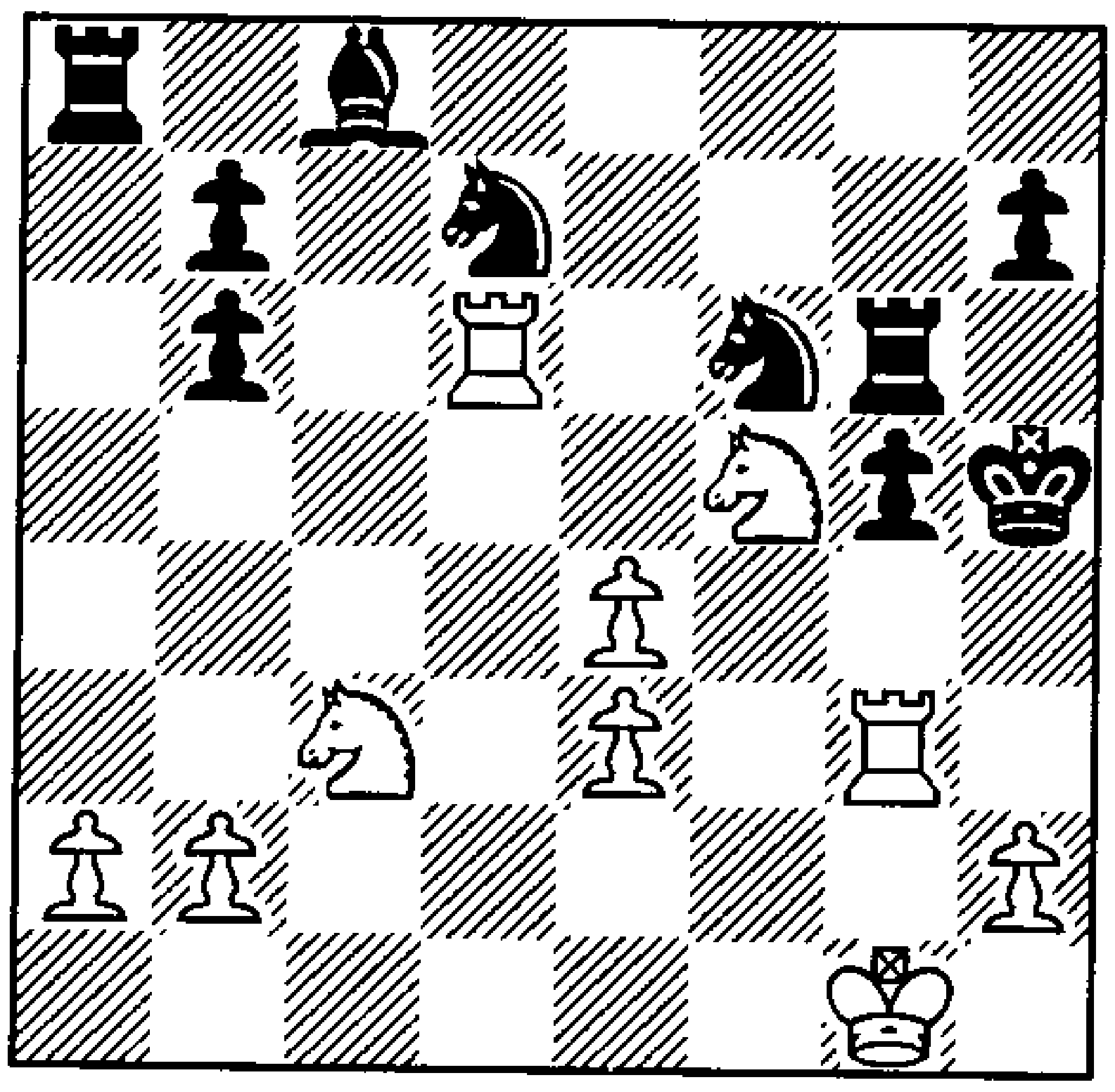
But not immediately 23 ♘f5?! because of 23...♔g6! (23...♖g6? 24 ♖h3+ ♔g4 25 ♔g2) 24 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 25 e5 ♘g4 26 e6 ♘de5 etc..

23...♔g4 24 ♖g3+ (24 ♔g2? ♖xe7) **24...♔h5 25 ♘f5!**

White already has perpetual check, but Capa is eager to create a masterpiece! Weaker is 25 ♘cd5 ♖xe7! (25...♘xd5? 26 ♖h6+!) 26 ♘xe7 ♖xa2! 27 ♘xc8 ♘xe4 28 ♖xd7 ♘xg3 29 hxg3 ♔g4 with a probable draw.

25...♖g6

Another key moment. 'The position is most interesting. Black is in a mating net, but to finish the work is most difficult.' (Capablanca)



26 ♘e7?

In mutual time-trouble (the control was on the 30th move) White tries to save time on the clock by repeating moves and he misses a study-like win, pointed out later by Capablanca: 26 ♖h3+! ♔g4 27 ♔g2 (threatening ♘d1 and ♘f2 mate) 27...♘xe4 28 ♖d5! ♘xc3 29 ♖h4+!! gxh4 30 ♘h6+ ♖xh6 31 h3 mate, or 27...♘c5 28 ♘h6+ (*28 ♘e7!? ♘h5 29 ♖xg6 hxg6 30 ♖f3! – G. K.*) 28...♖xh6 29 ♖xh6 ♘cxe4?! (*Black also loses after 29...♘h5 30 ♖d8! ♔h4 31 ♔f2 – G. K.*) 30 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 31 ♖d5 and 32 h3 mate.

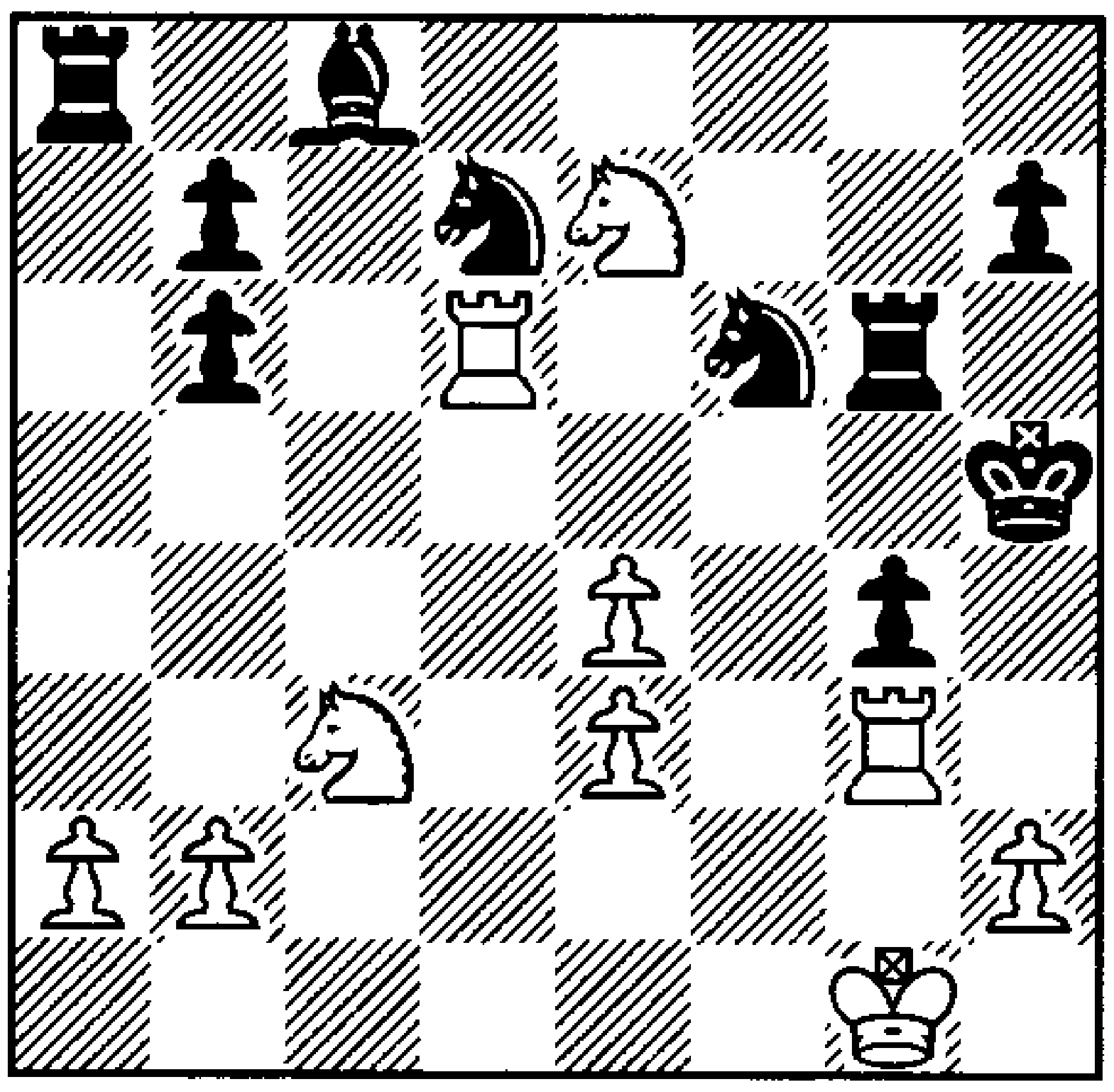
26...g4?

Aiming to avoid repeating the position (26...♖g7 27 ♘f5) and to escape with his king from the mating threats, Black makes a fatal mistake. 'The idea of not moving the rook was in itself correct, only the correct move had to be found – 26...♘c5!' (Bogoljubow) For example:

1) 27 ♘xg6 ♘fxe4 28 ♖d8 ♔xg6 (28...♘xg3? 29 ♘e7) 29 ♖g2 (29 ♘xe4? ♘xe4 30 ♖g2 ♖xa2!) 29...♘xc3 (or 29...♘e6 30

♖xc8 ♖xc8 31 ♘xe4) 30 bxc3 ♘e6 31 ♖e8 ♔f7 (31...♘c7!? 32 ♖e7 ♘d5) 32 ♖h8 ♔g7 with equality;

2) 27 ♖f3 ♘cxe4 (after 27...♘fxe4 Black has to reckon with 28 ♖xg6! hxg6 29 ♖f8 ♘xc3?? 30 ♖h8+ ♔g4 31 ♔g2 and 32 h3 mate) 28 ♘xg6 ♘xd6 29 ♖xf6 ♘e8! (less clear is 29...♘f5 30 ♘e5 ♖a5 31 ♘c4 ♖c5 32 ♘xb6 ♘xe3 33 ♖f3! ♘c4 34 ♘e4 ♖c6 35 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 36 ♖f7) 30 ♖f8 ♗e6 31 ♘e5 ♔h6! and ...♔g7 equalising.



27 ♘xg6 ♔xg6?!

'If 27...hxg6 28 e5.' (Capablanca) But even so, in this case the win for White is more difficult than in the game: 28...♘e8 (28...♘h7 29 e6 ♘e5 30 ♘d5!; 28...♘g8 29 e6 ♘e5 30 ♖d8 ♘e7 31 ♖e8 ♘5c6 32 e4) 29 ♖e6 (29 ♖d4!? ♔h6 30 e6) 29...♘g7 30 ♖e7 ♔h6 31 ♖xg4 ♖a5 (or 31...b5 32 ♖h4+ ♘h5 33 ♖e8 ♘b6 34 e6 ♔g7 35 e4 etc.) 32 ♖h4+ ♘h5 33 ♖c4 ♖c5 34 e6 ♘df6 35 ♖xc5 bxc5 36 ♘a4 ♘g7 37 ♘xc5 ♘d5 38 ♖d7 ♘b6 39 ♖d8.

28 ♖xg4+ ♔f7

After 28...♔h5 29 ♖g7! ♖a5 both 30 ♘d5 ♘xd5 31 ♖xh7+ ♔g5 32 ♖g7+ ♔h5 33 ♖xd5+ ♖xd5 34 exd5 and 30 ♘e2 ♖g5+ 31 ♘g3+ ♔h4 32 ♖f7! are good for White.

29 ♖f4 ♔g7 30 e5 ♘e8

Or 30...♘g8 31 ♖c4 (31 e6!?) 31...♘xe5 32 ♖c7+ ♗d7 (32...♘f7 33 ♖d8) 33 ♖dxd7+ ♘xd7 34 ♖xd7+ ♔g6 35 ♖xb7 winning.

31 ♖e6 ♘c7 32 ♖e7+ 1-0

32...♔g6 33 e6 ♘c5 34 ♖xc7 ♘xe6 35 ♖g4+ ♔f5 36 ♖cc4 b5 37 ♖b4. 'An extremely tense game.' (Bogoljubow)

In spite of this defeat, Efim Bogoljubow won the tournament, achieving the greatest success in his career and in the eyes of the general public becoming one of the real contenders for the chess crown. Whereas Capablanca, although he scored 8 out of 9(!) at the finish, finished only third, half a point behind Lasker (the results of Moscow 1925 are given on p.221).

Nevertheless, as is apparent from the above game between Capablanca and Bogoljubow, the difference in the class of their play was striking. Bogoljubow was a strong, talented practical player, but as regards his level of positional understanding – still an amateur. And almost every game of his with Capablanca ended in failure: the overall score of their meetings was +5 =2 in favour of the Cuban. He was also markedly inferior to Alekhine (cf. the chapter on the fourth world champion).

But this did not bother Bogoljubow. When early in 1927 the Americans invited him to New York, to a four-cycle match-tournament of the six leading grandmasters in the world, in reply he suggested that... 'instead of this mediocre tournament a Bogoljubow-Capablanca match should be arranged.' And, of course, he was replaced – by Spielmann, the victor of Semmering 1926.

Initially it was planned that 'the first prizewinner of the match-tournament (or the second, if Capablanca should be first) will become the official challenger for the world championship.' However, by that time Capablanca and Alekhine had already agreed on a match for the crown, and this condition was removed on the challenger's demand.

New York 1927 more than restored the shaken prestige of the world champion, who won the mini-matches against all five of his opponents: 1. Capablanca – 14 out of 20 (undefeated!), 2. Alekhine – 11½; 3. Nimzowitsch

– 10½; 4. Vidmar – 10; 5. Spielmann – 8; 6. Marshall – 6.

Let us examine another classic game by Capablanca, illustrating his amazing superiority over the leading grandmasters of his era. His opponent Nimzowitsch held second place for a long time, but by the time of his fourth game with the champion, in the words of Tartakower, 'he had evidently lost faith in his principles, if he was not simply tired – and he lost without much of a fight.'

Game 103

A.Nimzowitsch-J.R.Capablanca

New York 1927, 15th round

Caro-Kann Defence B12

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5

As we see, Nimzowitsch liked to play 3 e5 ('aiming for an outpost') not only against the French Defence (*Game No.92*). At the end of the 20th century this variation became very popular. For Black a considerable contribution to its development was made by Karpov.

3...♗f5

The most natural reply: the bishop is placed outside the pawn chain! In the Tal-Botvinnik return match (Moscow 1961) 3...c5 4 dxc5 e6 was tried three times – a French with an extra tempo for White. But whether he has an advantage is not clear, and now this 'dubious' continuation is quite popular (an example: Shirov-Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 2001). An interesting evolution of ideas, wouldn't you agree?

4 ♗d3

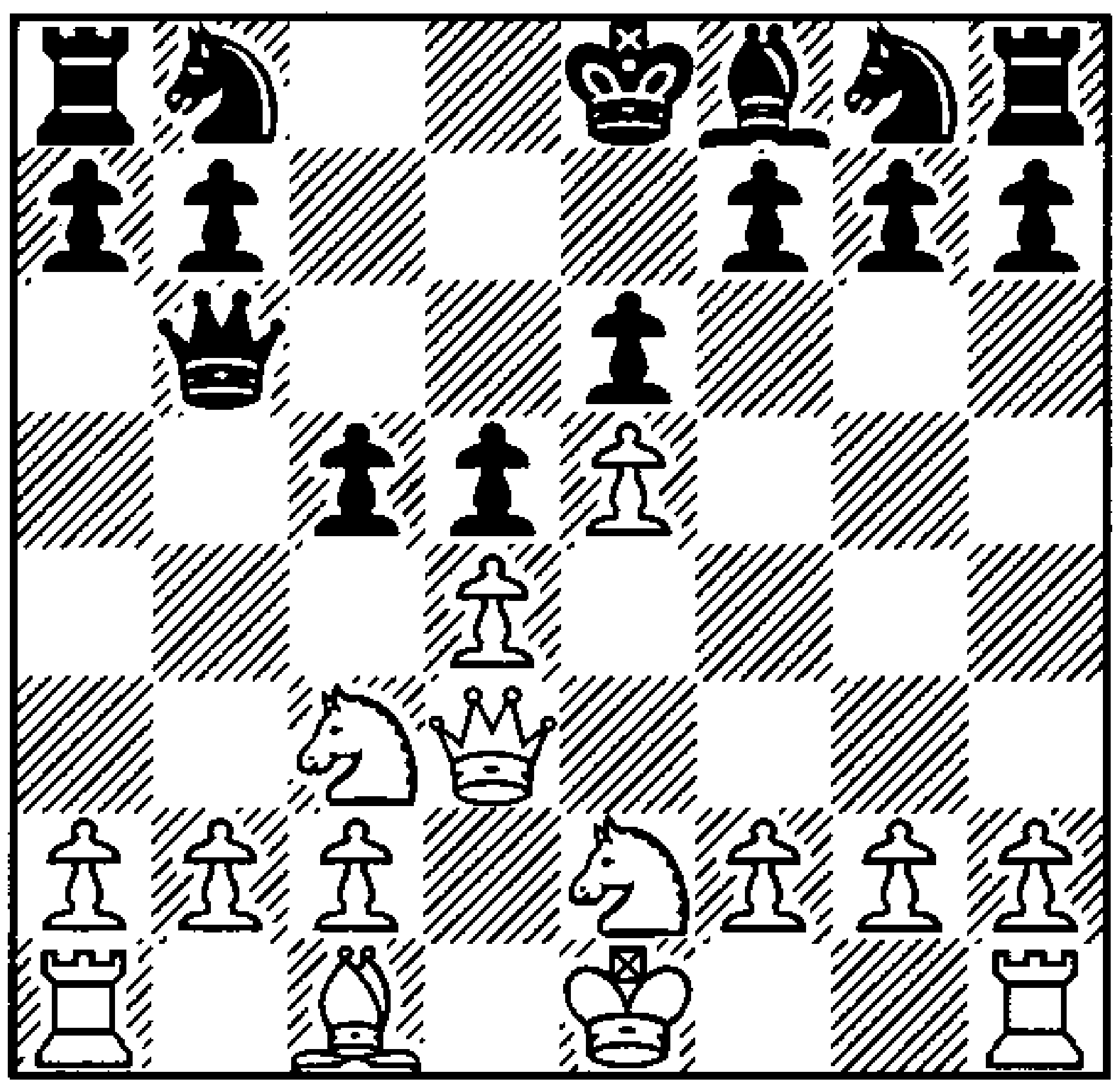
Too inoffensive: again the first steps of theory! White himself helps his opponent to finally solve the problem of his bishop and to obtain a solid position with a flexible pawn structure. At one time Tal tried both 4 c4 and 4 h4 h6 5 g4 ♗d7 6 h5, and in the early 1990s 4 ♘f3 e6 5 ♗e2 c5 6 0-0 ♘c6 7 c3 was tested. But extremely popular now is the ultra-sharp set-up with 4 ♘c3 e6 5 g4!? ♗g6 6 ♘ge2, in which I was able to crush Karpov (Linares 2001).

3...♗xd3 5 ♕xd3 e6 6 ♘c3

Or 6 ♘e2 ♕b6 (6...♕a5+! 7 ♗d2 ♕a6 equalising is even better) 7 0-0 ♕a6! with an easy game for Black (Duras-Nimzowitsch, San Sebastian 1912; Atkins-Capablanca, London 1922).

6...♕b6 7 ♘ge2 c5

'The safest course would have been 7...♕a6, to exchange queens... which would facilitate the draw.' (Capablanca) And indeed, 8 ♘f4 (8 ♕g3 or 8 ♕h3 – 8...♘e7!) 8...♕xd3 9 ♘xd3 ♘d7 10 ♗e3 ♘e7 11 f4 ♘f5 12 ♗f2 h5 leads to an equal endgame, although I think that even here Capa would have had every chance of winning: there is still much play to come.



8 dxc5 ♗xc5 9 0-0

White intends to seize control of d4. 9 ♕g3?! ♘e7! 10 ♕xg7 ♖g8 11 ♕xh7 ♗xf2+ 12 ♔f1 ♗d4 etc. is unfavourable for him.

9...♘e7

'With the idea of placing a knight at f5 as quickly as possible.' (Capablanca)

10 ♘a4

'10 a3 came into consideration, forcing 10...♕c6 (10...♕c7?! 11 ♘b5!), which would have hindered somewhat Black's mobilisation plan. By contrast, the surprise thrust 10 b4 would not have given White anything after 10...♕xb4 11 ♘b5 ♘a6 12 ♗a3 ♕a5 13 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 14 ♘d6+ ♔d7! (14...♔f8? 15 ♕f3) 15 ♕g3 ♖hg8 16 ♘xf7 ♘f5 with advantage to

Black.' (Alekhine) A vivid demonstration of Alekhine's imagination, although after 16 c4! White has quite good counterplay.

But the pawn sacrifice 10 b4?! is indeed highly dubious: after 10...♗xb4!? 11 ♖b1 ♕a5 White does not have any particular compensation for it.

10...♕c6 11 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 12 ♗e3 ♕c7 13 f4

'White's outpost already causes him problems, and does not bring any benefits.' (Tartakower)

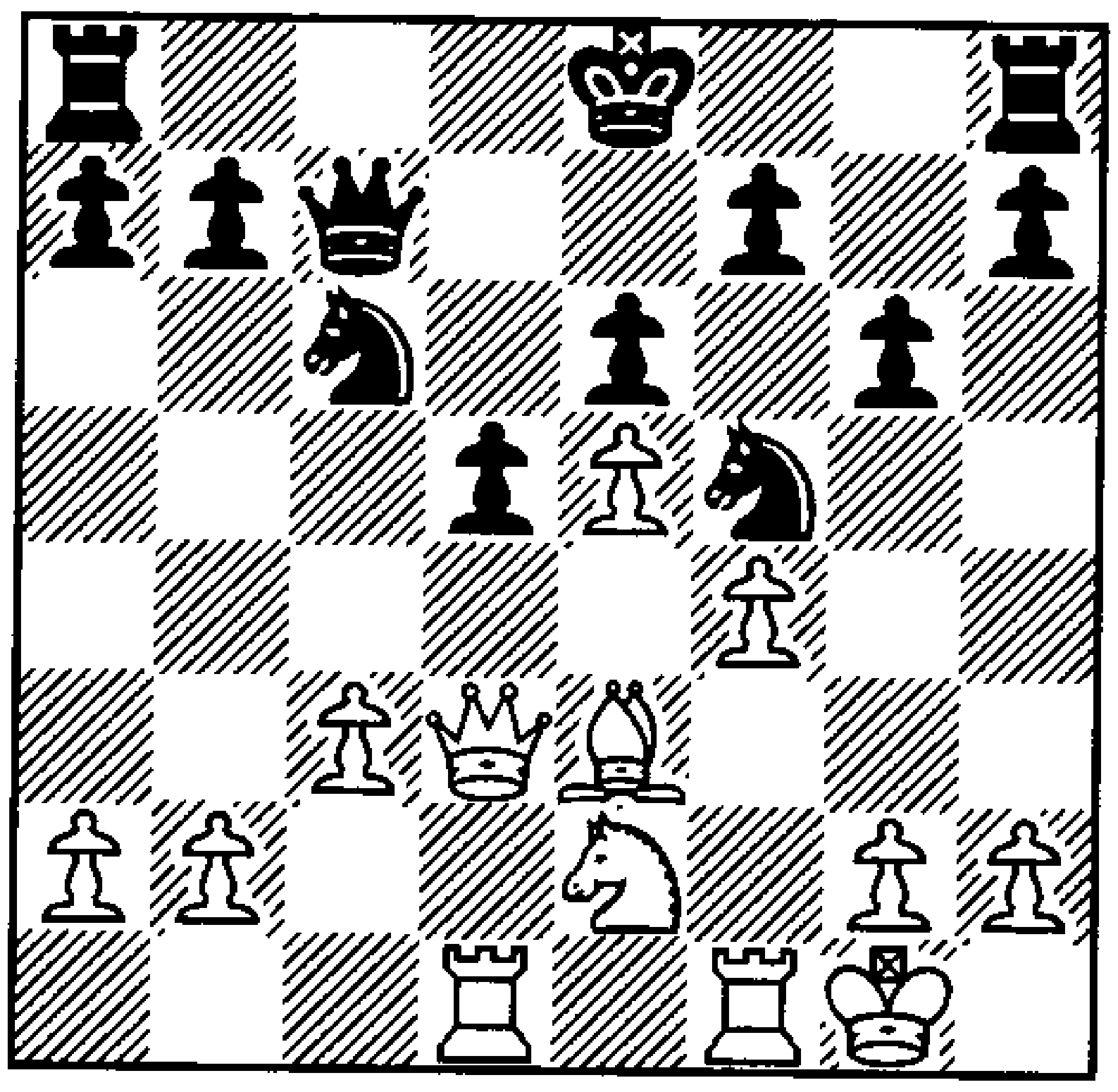
13...♘f5 14 c3?!

'Because of the weak points in White's position it was essential to play actively,' writes Alekhine and he suggests 14 ♖ac1! ♘c6 *(14...♘xe3!? 15 ♕xe3 ♘c6 16 c4 – G. K.)* 15 ♗f2 h5 *(15...0-0!? 16 g4 ♘fe7 – G. K.)* 16 c4 (Boleslavsky's recommendation 14 ♗f2! h5 15 ♖ac1 ♘c6 16 c4 comes to the same thing) 16...dxc4 17 ♕xc4 0-0 18 ♖fd1 and then ♘c3-e4, 'when he is in no danger of losing'. Indeed, after 18...♖fd8 19 ♘c3 ♖xd1+ 20 ♖xd1 ♖d8 21 ♕e2 h4 the chances are equal.

14...♘c6 15 ♖ad1?!

'What is the rook looking for on the d-file? White should still have played 15 ♗f2! h5 16 ♖ac1, preparing c3-c4.' (Alekhine)

15...g6



In his comments to move 14 Capablanca states that: 'In such positions it is generally better to retard castling as long as possible in order to compel the opponent to guard against both possibilities.' (Capablanca) The champion deliberately delays ...h7-h5, provoking White's next move.

16 g4?

'An unbelievable move for a player of Nimzowitsch's class: it deprives him of any chances on the kingside and rids the opponent of any fears regarding the dark squares in his position – and thereby grants Capablanca complete freedom on the queenside. Now White's game is strategically lost.' (Alekhine)

One senses a certain complex in Nimzowitsch, a feeling of being psychologically doomed. In addition, he preferred Black's position – the knight on the blockading square f5! And he wanted to drive away this knight as soon as possible...

Of course, correct was the simple 16 ♗f2 h5 (if 16...0-0, then 17 g4 ♘fe7 18 ♗h4!? is now unpleasant – Black has a 'hole' at f6! – 18...♕b6+ 19 ♔h1 ♕xb2 20 ♗f6 with an attack) and now either Alekhine's 17 ♖d2 followed by 18 ♖c1 and c3-c4, or else the gambit 17 c4!? ♘b4 18 ♕a3 (if 18 ♕d2 ♕xc4 19 ♖c1, then 19...♕b5 20 ♖c5 ♕a4 21 ♖c7 b6) 18...♕xc4 19 ♘d4! with the initiative for the pawn – the enemy king is caught in the centre: 19...♘c6 20 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 21 ♖c1 ♕a6 22 ♕xa6 bxa6 23 ♖c7. There is nothing terrible here for Black, but White too is not in danger.

16...♘xe3 17 ♕xe3 h5!

'Brilliant! After White's almost forced reply his entire kingside becomes ossified and then Black is free to turn the weight of the struggle to the queenside.' (Tartakower)

18 g5

'Also in Black's favour is 18 h3 hxg4 19 hxg4 0-0-0 (19...g5!?) with the threats of 20...g5 and 20...♖h4.' (Alekhine) But now he calmly castles kingside and one already wants to say: 'the rest is a matter of technique'. However, this evaluation is somewhat premature and White's defensive resources are not yet exhausted.

18...0-0 19 ♘d4

'White has a strong-point, but no freedom of action.' (Tartakower) Little would be changed by 19 ♖d2 with the idea of ♖f3, b2-b3, h2-h3, ♔h2 and ♘g3: Black places his rook at c8, queen at a5, doubles rooks on the c-file, retreats his knight to e7 and begins advancing his b-pawn. The essential point is that White's king is very bad, and a breakthrough on the queenside will lead to its downfall sooner or later.

19...♕b6 20 ♖f2 ♖fc8

'The file of the future!' (Tartakower)

21 a3?!

I think that even after the best 21 ♖d3 ♕a5 22 b3! White would be unable to hold out after 22...♖c7, ...♖ac8 and ...b7-b5-b4.

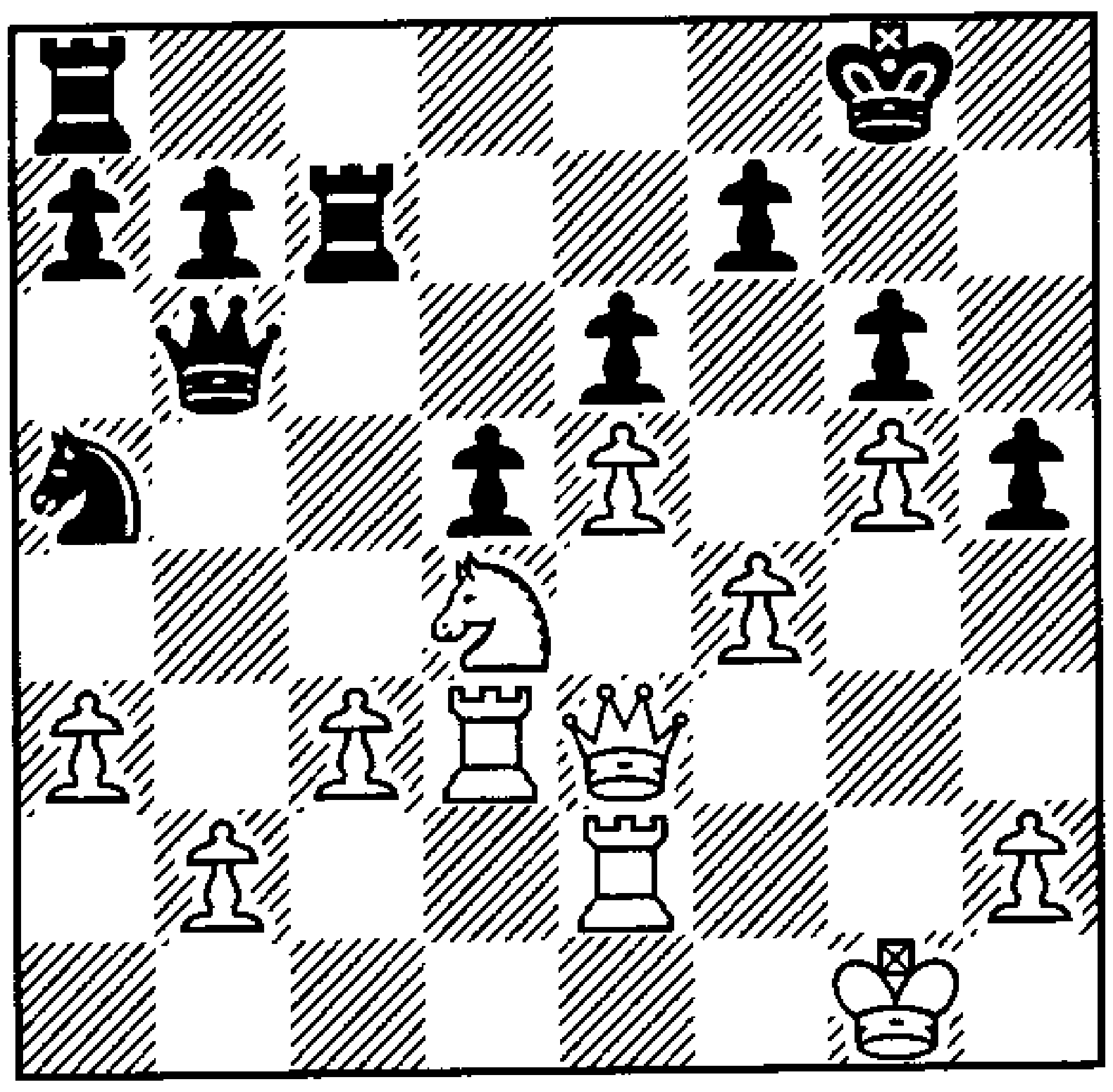
21...♖c7 22 ♖d3 ♘a5?!

A serious inaccuracy: the idea of penetrating to c4 with the knight proves to be fundamentally incorrect: 'Contrary to his custom, Capablanca tries to win combinatively and because of this he merely loses time. Correct was 22...♘e7 23 ♖fd2 ♖ac8 24 ♕f2 ♕a6, then ...b7-b5, ...♕b6 and ...a7-a5, after which the outcome would be decided by ...b5-b4 in combination with ...♘f5.' (Alekhine)

The nature of Black's mistake is perfectly understandable: his position was so good that Capa was already conducting the game simply 'by hand', disregarding possible counterplay for the opponent.

23 ♖e2

Suddenly White has come alive: the unclear chance 24 f5!? exf5 25 e6 has appeared.

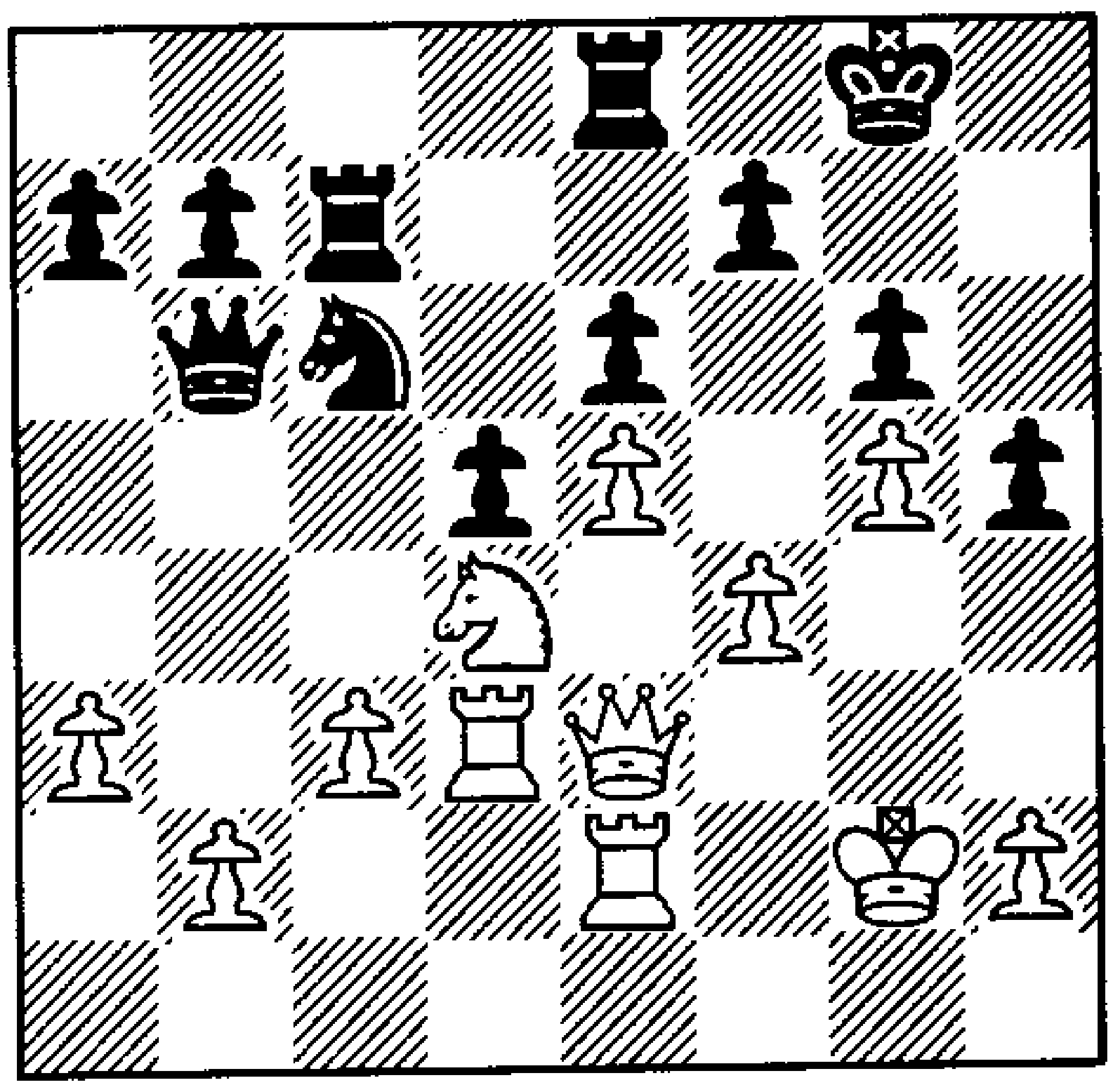


23...♖e8

'Black was evidently convinced that 23...♘c4 24 ♕f2 ♘xa3!? was dubious in view of 25 f5!' (Alekhine) This is bad only in the event of 25...exf5?! 26 e6 ♘b5 27 exf7+ ♔xf7 28 ♖e6 ♖c6 29 ♘xc6 ♕xf2+ 30 ♔xf2 ♔xe6 31 ♖e3+ ♔d6 32 ♘e7 with an attack, whereas after 25...gxf5! 26 g6 ♘b5! (but not 26...fxg6? 27 ♖g3 ♘c4? 28 ♖xg6+ ♖g7 29 ♕g3 winning) 27 gxf7+ ♔xf7 28 ♕h4 ♘xd4 29 ♕xh5+ ♔e7 Black has an obvious advantage.

Therefore it seems to me that if 23...♘c4?! it is better to play 24 ♕c1! with a double-edged game.

24 ♔g2 (24 f5?! exf5 25 e6? fxe6 26 ♘xe6? ♖xe6 wins for Black) **24...♘c6** (reverting to the correct path)



25 ♖ed2?!

'Much better practical chances of drawing were offered by 25 ♘xc6 ♕xc6! 26 ♖d4 (but not 26 ♕xa7? b6 27 ♕a6 ♖a8). But even here with accurate play Black should win.' (Alekhine) This is not so: the exchange of knights would have eased White's defence!

25...♖ec8 (25...♘e7!) **26 ♖e2** (26 ♘xc6!) **26...♘e7!** (at last!) **27 ♖ed2 ♖c4!**

'A magic square.' (Tartakower) 'There begins the concluding phase of the game, which Capablanca conducts clearly and confidently.' (Alekhine)

28 ♕h3?! (28 ♕f2 was nevertheless better) **28...♔g7!**

Preparing ...♘f5. 'Consolidation never

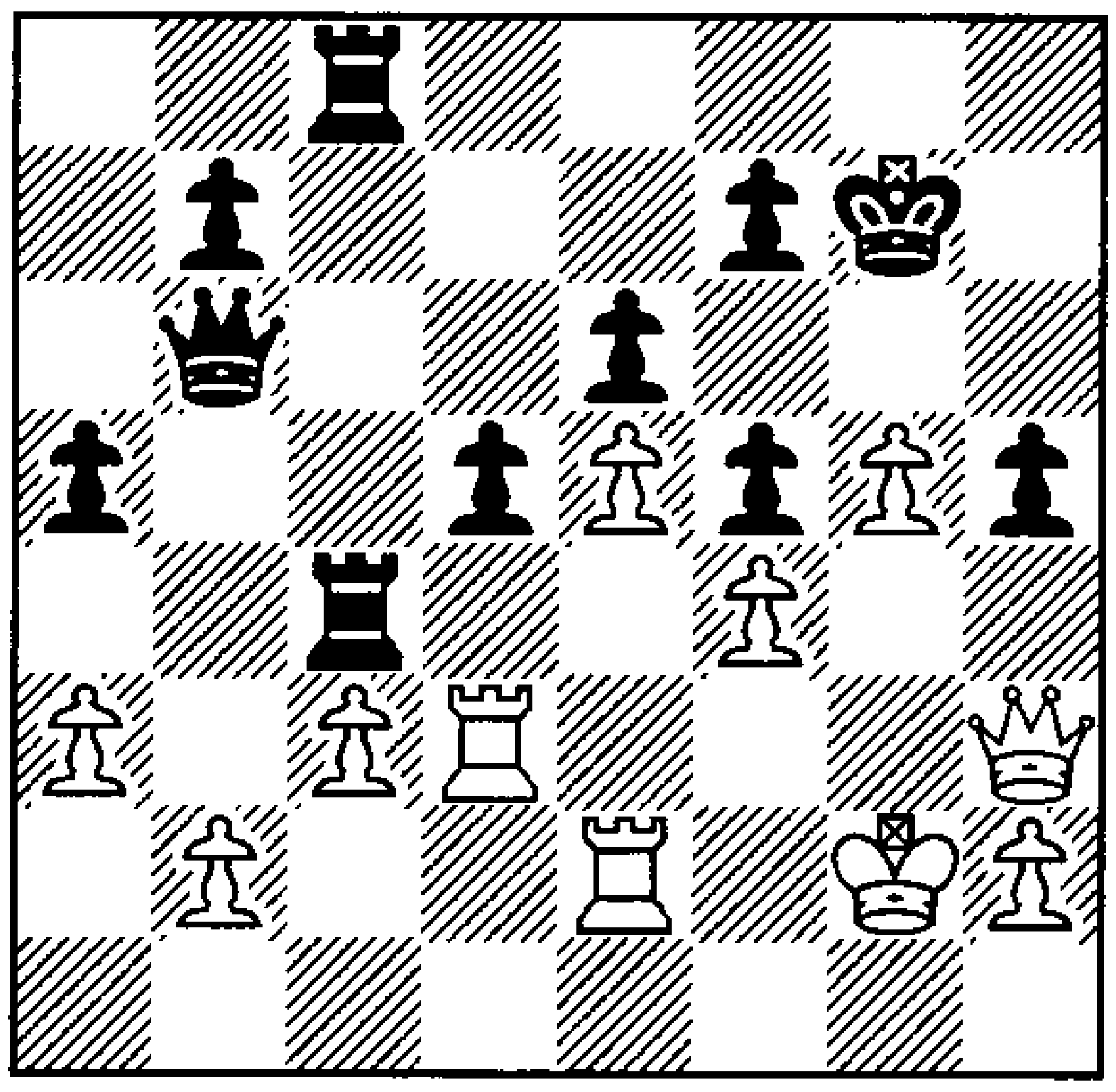
does any harm. With amazing skill Capablanca suppresses all the opponent's attempts and then forces him to dance to Black's "positional" tune. White has absolutely no counterplay.' (Tartakower)

29 ♖f2?! (29 ♕e3 was more tenacious) **29...a5 30 ♖e2 ♘f5!**

(at just the right moment: White is forced to exchange) **31 ♘xf5+**

If 31 ♖ed2, then 31...♘xd4 32 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 33 cxd4 ♕b5! 34 ♕f3 ♖c1! (Capablanca).

31...gxf5



32 ♕f3

32 ♕xh5? ♖h8 33 ♕f3 ♖h4! was completely bad for White, for example: 34 ♕f2 ♕xf2+ 35 ♖xf2 ♖cxf4 36 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 37 ♖d4 ♖xd4 38 cxd4 ♔g6 39 h4 ♔h5 40 ♔g3 a4 41 ♔h3 f4 winning.

32...♔g6 33 ♖ed2 ♖e4! (decisive centralisation) **34 ♖d4 ♖c4 35 ♕f2 ♕b5! 36 ♔g3**

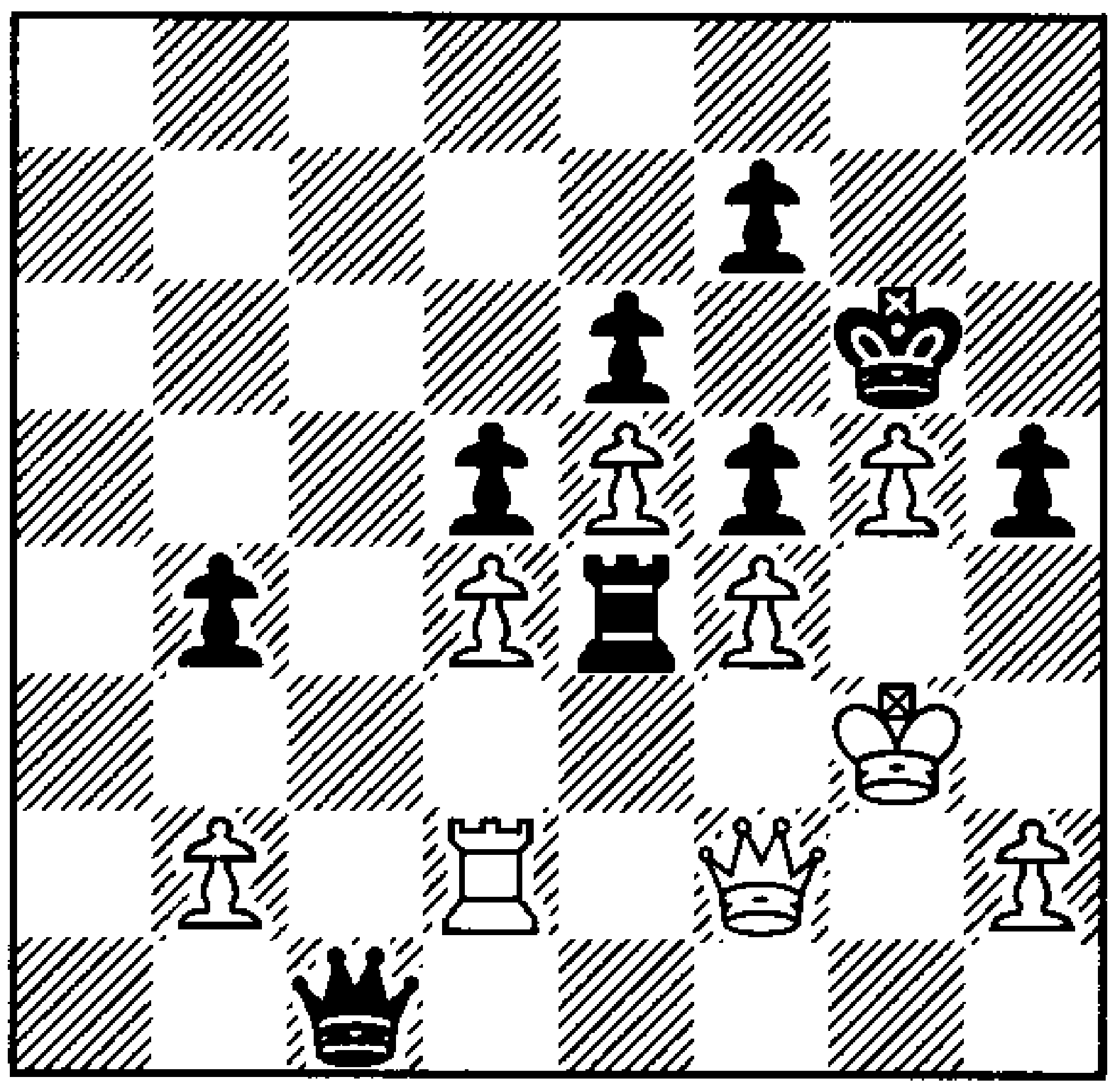
'If 36 ♖xc4 ♕xc4 37 ♖d4 Black would have probably replied 37...♕b3.' (Alekhine) And then ...b7-b5-b4.

36...♖cxd4! 37 cxd4 (37 ♖xd4? ♖e2) **37...♕c4! 38 ♔g2 b5**

'The pawn moves have the aim of eliminating possible targets for the opponent's counterplay. This is typical of the Cuban grandmaster's method of thinking.' (Alekhine)

39 ♔g1 b4 40 axb4 axb4 41 ♔g2 ♕c1! 42 ♔g3

'White has no good moves. If 42 h4, then 42...b3 with zugzwang.' (Panov)



42...♕h1!

'The quickest way to the goal, depriving the stalemated opponent even of king moves. In this "geometrical" game, which is one of Capablanca's best achievements, there was essentially no struggle, but only... the demonstration of a theorem!'. (Tartakower)

43 ♖d3

Also hopeless was 43 ♕g2 (43 ♕f3 h4+) 43...♕xg2+ 44 ♖xg2 ♖xd4 or 43 ♖e2 ♖xe2 44 ♕xe2 ♕g1+ and ...♕xd4.

43...♖e1 (threatening ...♖f1) **44 ♖f3 ♖d1 45 b3** (45 ♔h3 ♖d2! or 45 ♖b3 ♕e4 46 ♖xb4 ♖d3+ 47 ♔h4 ♖f3) **45...♖c1! 46 ♖e3**

Zugzwang: 46 h3 ♖g1+ 47 ♔h4 ♖g4 mate!, 46 ♕d2 h4+!, 46 ♕e2 ♕g1+ 47 ♕g2 ♕xd4 or 46 ♔h3 ♖c2!

46...♖f1! 0-1

In view of 47 ♕e2 ♕g1+ 48 ♔h3 ♖e1!! White resigned. 'One might suppose from this game that Capablanca had carefully read *My System* and then used all the theories contained therein against their inventor!' (Keene)

And so, during his six years on the throne the Cuban lost only three games, and he won, with enviable ease, more than forty. It appeared no one could threaten his supremacy...

'Speaking about Capablanca means asking yourself the question, what super-qualities must a modern player possess, to become world champion?' wrote Tartakower. 'In reply to this we would give two points: 1) the voluntary renunciation of the predominance of artistry in favour of the predominance of technique; 2) the introduction of some new principle into the game, and in Capablanca's case: the division of overall strategy into individual moves ("the cinema principle in chess!").'

Buenos Aires through the Eyes of Capablanca

The Capablanca-Alekhine match (Buenos Aires 1927) occupies a special place in history as a duel between two chess geniuses, at the height of their powers and talent. Therefore I will describe it twice, first from the viewpoint of the loser, and then, naturally, in the chapter about the winner.

The clear favourite was considered to be Capablanca. This was due both to the score of his previous meetings with Alekhine (+3 =7, not counting two won exhibition games) and to his triumph in New York 1927, reinforced by a spectacular win over the challenger with the black pieces. In a complicated, unfamiliar Modern Benoni-type position the champion displayed a deep understanding of chess and splendidly exploited his opponent's mistakes. 'As a consequence of my poor play,' wrote Alekhine, 'the value of this game is zero, but its psychological importance – not for the loser, but for the broad public – was enormous. There is no doubt that because of this game 95% of the so-called competent critics began trying to convince the entire chess world that there would be no struggle as such: there would be a rout.'

For example, Spielmann stated that Alekhine would not win a single game: 'In the form that Capablanca showed in New York, he is invincible!... I think that he will be on the throne for a long time yet.'

Apparently Capablanca himself also came to believe in this. Besides, he had another important advantage on his side: although the winner was to be the first to win six games (not counting draws), with a score of 5-5 the match would be considered to have ended in a draw and the champion would retain his title. A well-known pre-match statement by Alekhine involuntarily comes to mind: 'I have thoroughly prepared for the battle, but even so I cannot imagine how I will be able to win six games against Capablanca. However, I can imagine even less how he will win six games against me.' Capa did not need to: five wins were sufficient for him – then the match would have been continued only in order to divide the prize fund.

Nowadays, due to the influence of my first match with Karpov, unlimited matches have the reputation of being excessively prolonged and uninteresting. But the match in Buenos Aires, which lasted 73 days, was not like that – even despite the abundance of draws and the uncommonly monotonous choice of openings (32 Queen's Gambits out of 34 games). It was an extremely tenacious, nervy and tense struggle, with numerous fine attacks and counterattacks, with models of positional manoeuvring and resourceful defence. And, as usual, with dramatic mistakes...

It seems to me that up till now the chess content of his 'match of giants' has not been properly evaluated, and I will try as far as possible, with both human and machine analysis, to fill this gap.

The match began with a sensational defeat for Capablanca, who played the first game simply dreadfully! He opened with 1 e4, received in reply a French Defence and halfheartedly and insipidly exchanged on d5. And he was effectively lost after 17 moves, although the conversion of the advantage took until the 43rd move. Capa did not play 1 e4 again – and, it would seem, he was correct not to do so...

But already in the third game the champion gained a fine revenge, and then, after three draws, he easily and confidently won the seventh. This game is noteworthy not only for the wonderful play of the Cuban, but also for the amazingly poor analytical standard of the subsequent commentaries.

Game 104

J.R.Capablanca-A.Alekhine

World Championship Match,
Buenos Aires 1927, 7th game
Queen's Gambit D52

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 ♘bd7 5 ♗g5 c6 6 e3 ♕a5

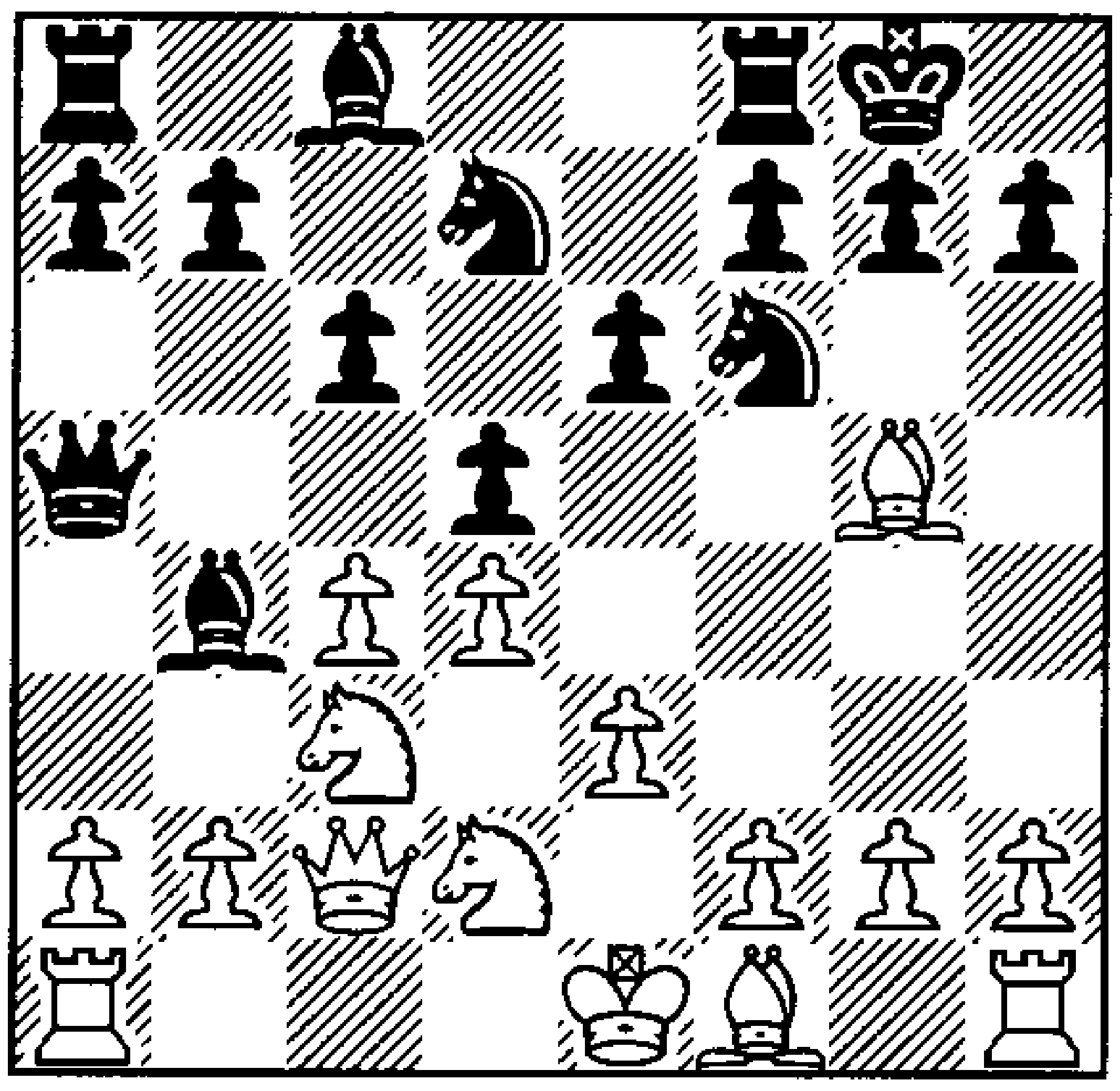
In Buenos Aires the Cambridge Springs Defence was Alekhine's main weapon with Black, and the resulting opening dispute became the prototype of future theoretical battles in matches for the world crown.

7 ♘d2

Excessively modest is 7 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 8 ♗d3 ♗b4 9 ♕b3 dxc4 10 ♗xc4 0-0 11 0-0 ♗xc3 12 bxc3 b6 13 ♘e5 ♗b7 14 ♗e2 c5 15 ♘c4 ♕a6 16 ♕b2 ♗d5! 17 ♘e5 ♕c8 18 a4 ♘d7 19 c4 ♗e4 20 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 21 dxc5 bxc5 with a rapid draw (Capablanca-Ed. Lasker, New York 1924).

Sharper is 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 ♕d2 ♗b4 9 ♖c1 (as, for example, in the games Bogoljubow-Alekhine, Germany/Holland 12th matchgame 1929, and Kasparov-Smyslov, Vilnius 3rd matchgame 1984), or 8...♘7b6 9 ♗d3!? (Alekhine-Euwe, Holland 25th matchgame 1935), but not the harmless 9 ♘xd5 ♕xd2+ 10 ♘xd2 exd5 11 ♗d3 a5 (Karpov-Kasparov, Moscow 47th matchgame 1984/85).

7...♗b4 8 ♕c2 0-0 (later the challenger switched to 8...dxc4 – *Game Nos.106, 125*)



9 ♗h4!?

It would appear that this interesting reply surprised Alekhine: he thought for a long time. 9 ♗e2 was usually played, when Bogoljubow replied 9...e5, while later 9...c5!? became fashionable.

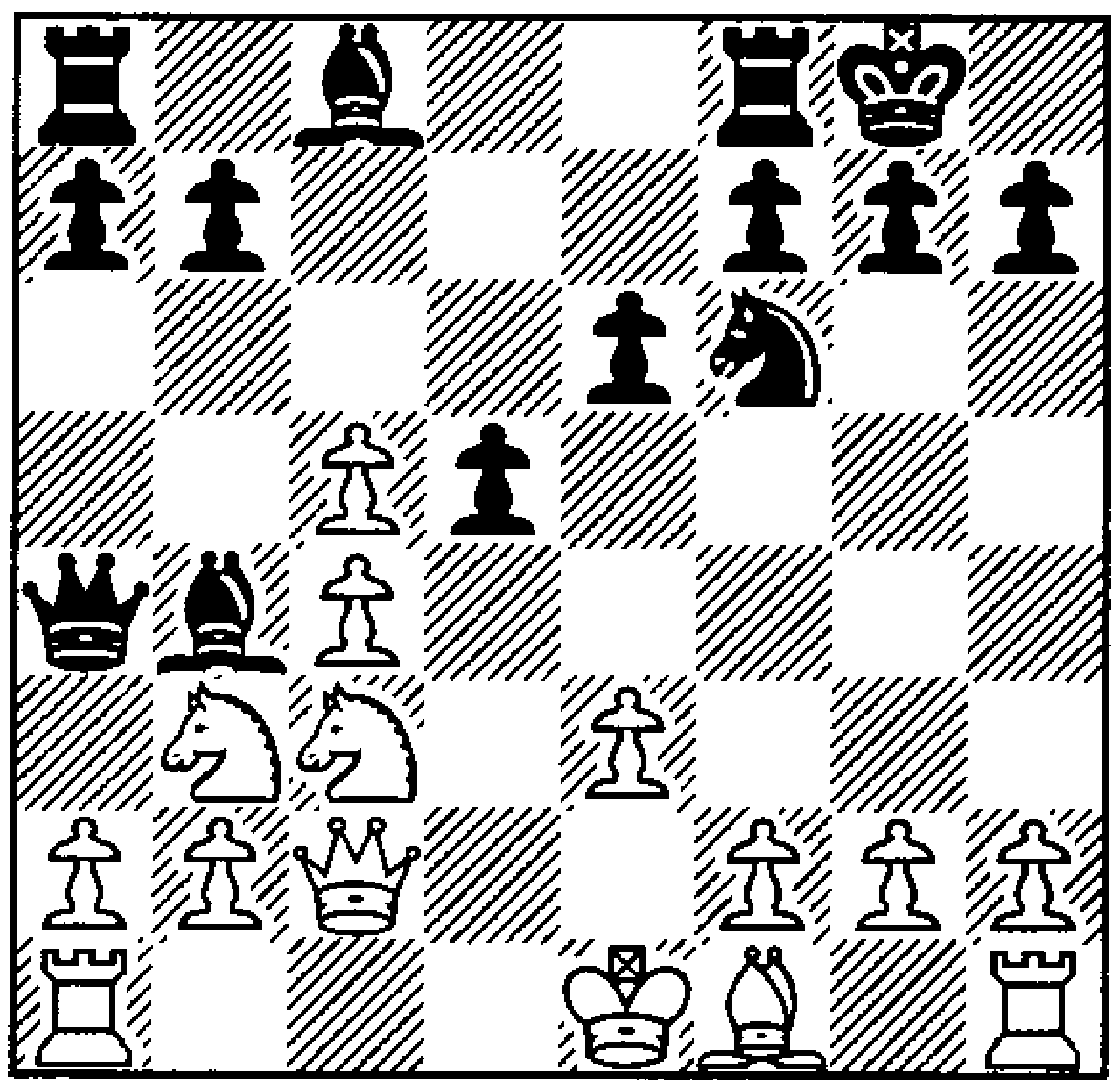
9...c5

'I lost the game mainly because I was very tempted by the reply 9...e5. I spent a great deal of time considering all the complications associated with this move, and in the end I rejected it: after 10 dxe5 ♘e4 11 ♘dxe4 dxe4 12 e6! ♘e5 13 exf7+ ♖xf7 14 0-0-0! White retains the better chances.' (Alekhine) I agree that after 14...♗xc3?! 15 ♕xc3 ♕xc3+ 16 bxc3 ♗f5 17 ♖d4 he has a favourable endgame, but 14...♗f5! is stronger.

10 ♘b3 ♕a4!?

'A bold pawn sacrifice. After 10...♕c7 11 ♗g3 ♕c6 12 a3! White has the advantage.' (Panov) Which would have evaporated in the event of 12 dxc5 dxc4 13 ♗xc4 ♘xc5 14 0-0 ♗xc3 15 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 16 ♕xc3 ♘e4.

11 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 (of course, not 11...gxf6?! 12 cxd5 exd5 13 ♕d2) **12 dxc5**



12...♘e4?!

Starting with the ninth move, Alekhine thought for more than an hour! And, as often happens in such cases, he deviated from the correct path:

1) 12...♕c6 13 a3 (13 cxd5 exd5 is level) 13...♗xc5 14 cxd5 exd5 15 ♘xd5 (15 ♗b5 ♕d6! equalises) 15...♕xd5 16 ♘xc5 b6!? (after

16...♗f5 17 ♕c4 ♕xc4 18 ♗xc4 ♖ac8 19 ♖c1 ♖xc5 20 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 21 ♖xc5 White is slightly better) 17 ♘b3 ♗f5 18 ♕c4 ♕e5 with counterplay for the pawn;

2) 12...♗xc3+ 13 ♕xc3 ♘e4 14 ♕d4 ♕b4+ 15 ♔e2 e5! (inferior is 15...♕xc4+ 16 ♔e1 ♕c2 17 ♗e2) 16 ♕xe5 ♕xc4+ 17 ♔e1 ♕b4+ 18 ♔e2 with equal chances, or 14 ♕a5 ♕xa5+ 15 ♘xa5 ♘xc5 16 cxd5 exd5 17 ♖ac1 and White merely has a purely symbolic advantage.

13 cxd5?!

An error not mentioned by anyone. 13 ♗d3! is more accurate, for example: 13...♗xc3+ (but not 13...♘xc5? 14 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 15 ♘xc5) 14 bxc3 dxc4 15 ♗xe4 cxb3 16 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 17 ♕e4 ♕a5! 18 ♕h4 ♕xc3+ 19 ♔e2 g5 20 ♕h6 ♕g7 21 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 22 ♗d3 bxa2 23 ♖xa2 with somewhat the better endgame.

13...♗xc3+?

Strangely enough, almost everyone missed the simple 13...♘xc5! 14 ♖c1! (14 0-0-0!? Soultanbéieff; 14 ♖d1 exd5 15 ♖xd5?! ♗e6 etc. is pointless) 14...♘e4! (only 14...exd5? 15 ♘xc5 ♕xc2 16 ♖xc2 ♗xc5 17 ♘xd5 was suggested) with inevitable equality after either 15 ♗d3 (15 ♕xe4?? ♗xc3+) 15...exd5 16 0-0 ♗xc3 17 bxc3 ♗e6, or 15 dxe6 ♗xe6 16 ♗d3 ♕xa2 17 ♗xe4 ♗xb3 18 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 19 0-0 ♗xc2 20 ♘xa2 ♗xh7 21 ♘xb4 ♖ad8 22 ♖fd1 ♖xd1+ 23 ♖xd1 ♖c8 24 ♔f1 a5 25 ♘d3 ♖c2 26 b3 ♖c3.

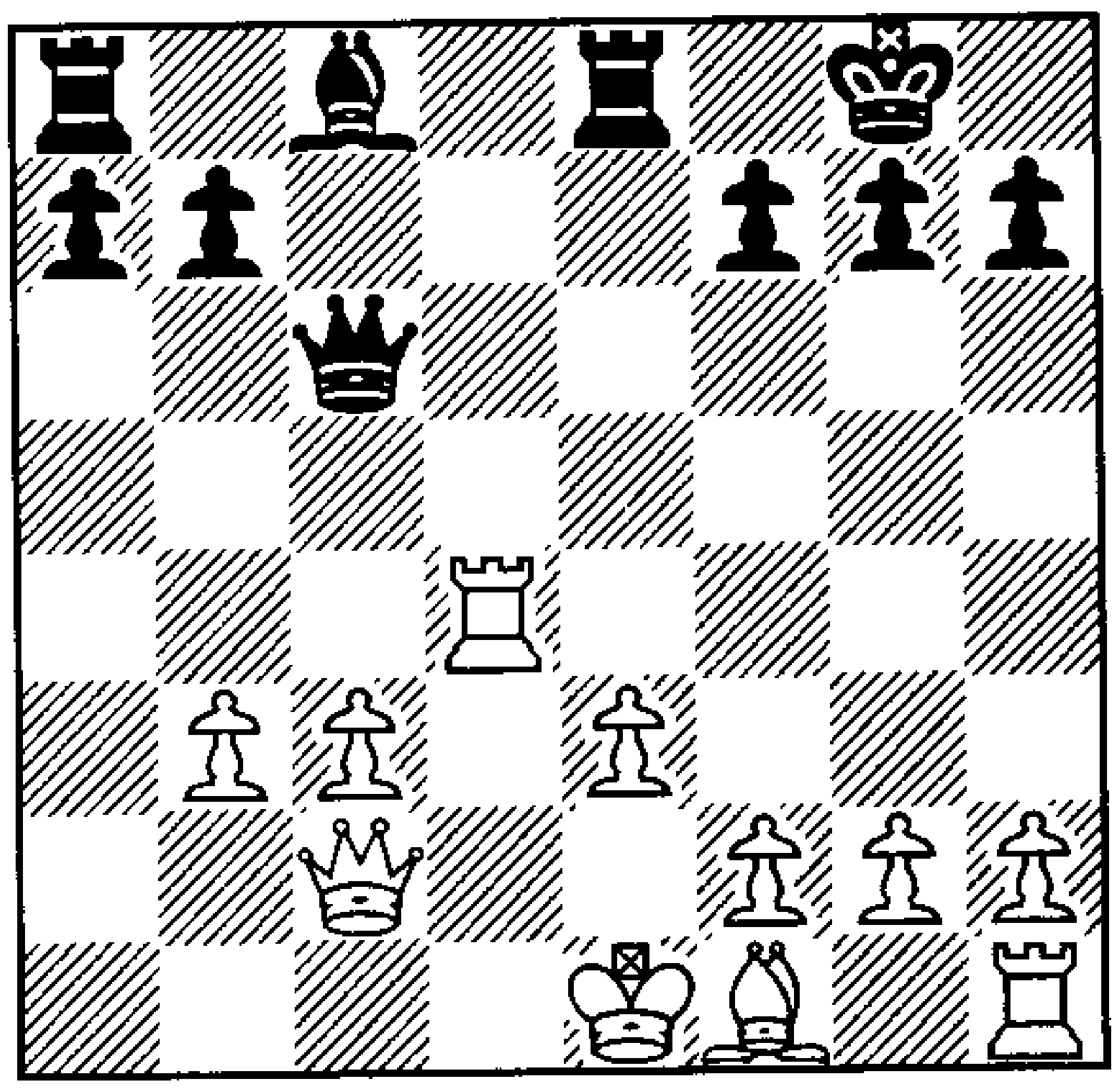
14 bxc3 ♘xc5 (or 14...exd5 15 ♗d3 ♗e6 16 0-0 ♖fc8 17 c4!) **15 ♖d1!**

When he exchanged on c3 Alekhine was probably hoping for 15 dxe6?! ♗xe6 and he overlooked this energetic move, which gives White both an extra pawn and an attack.

15...exd5 (if 15...♖d8, then 16 ♖d4! ♕a3 17 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 18 ♗d3) **16 ♖xd5 ♘xb3?!**

It is probable that 16...b6, as suggested by Lasker, is slightly better, but it would not have changed fundamentally the evaluation of the position: 17 ♖d4! (17 ♗e2? ♗e6 equalises; 17 ♖d2!?) 17...♕c6 18 ♘xc5 bxc5 19 ♖h4 f5 20 ♗c4+ ♔h8 21 0-0 ♗b7 22 f3 ♖ad8 23 ♖f4, or 18 ♗c4!? ♘e6 19 ♖h4 h6 20 ♗d3 f5 21 0-0 ♗b7 22 f3, in both cases with an obvious advantage to White.

17 axb3 ♕c6 18 ♖d4 (an ideal post for the rook) **18...♖e8**



19 ♗d3!?

'After the loss of the pawn Black's position has become hopeless. Capablanca could have also decided the game by the simpler 19 e4 followed by f2-f3, but the way chosen by him is far more elegant. In my view, the concluding attack is one of his best tactical achievements.' (Alekhine)

Indeed, 19 e4! would have guaranteed White a firm advantage: 19...♗e6 20 ♗c4 ♖ad8 21 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 22 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 23 0-0. But – a rare instance! – Capa preferred, as he himself put it, 'a bold transition to a counterattack' and the 'extremely interesting play' with the king in the centre. This shows that, if he desired, he could play sharply, creatively, demonstrating fresh ideas. Especially if he was in an excellent frame of mind and realised that he was not especially risking anything...

19...♕xg2 20 ♗xh7+ ♔f8 (or 20...♔h8 21 ♗e4 ♕h3 22 ♖g1 etc.) **21 ♗e4 ♕h3 22 ♕d2! ♗e6 23 c4 a5**

Parrying ♕b4+.

24 ♖g1!

Returning the pawn for an attack. Dangerous was 24 ♗xb7? ♖ab8 25 ♗c6 ♖xb3 26 ♕d1 ♖b6 27 ♗xe8 ♕g2 with complications.

24...♕xh2

The best chance. Soultanbéieff's (and later Golombek's) recommendation of 24...♕h6?! is more than dubious on account of 25 ♗xb7 ♖ab8 26 ♗c6 ♖xb3 27 ♕d1! (an important nuance) 27...♖bb8 28 ♗xe8, for example: 28...♕xh2 29 ♖f1 ♖xe8 (29...♔xe8 30 ♕a4+) 30 ♕b3 ♗h3 31 ♖h4! ♕g2 32 ♖h8+ ♔e7 33 ♕a3+ ♔f6 34 ♕d6+ ♖e6 35 ♕f4+ ♔g6 36 ♖xh3! ♕xh3 37 ♖g1+ ♔h7 38 ♕xf7 and wins.

25 ♖h1 ♕c7 26 ♕b2!

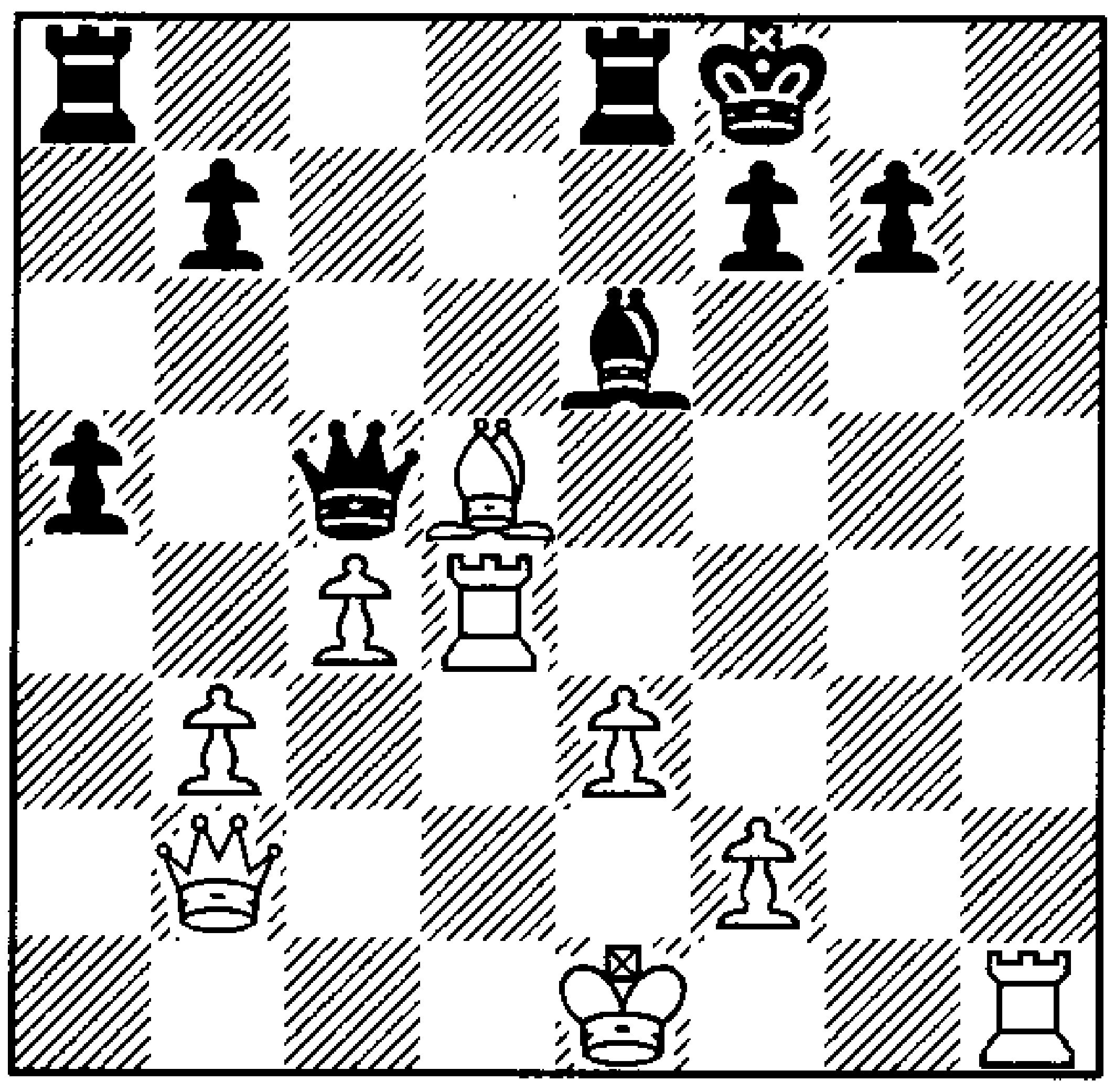
Threatening 27 ♕a3+ ♔g8 28 ♗h7+ ♔h8 29 ♖dh4.

26...♕c5

Interesting, in my opinion, was 26...♔e7!?, which again has not been pointed out by anyone. After 27 ♗d5! (27 ♕a3+ ♔f6) 27...♗xd5 28 ♖xd5 f6 29 ♕d4 Black still has a sorry position, but at least there does not appear to be a forced win.

27 ♗d5!

'With a new dangerous threat: 28 ♗xe6 fxe6 (28...♖xe6? 29 ♖h8+) 29 ♖f4+ ♔g8 30 ♕c2.' (Panov)



27...♖a6!

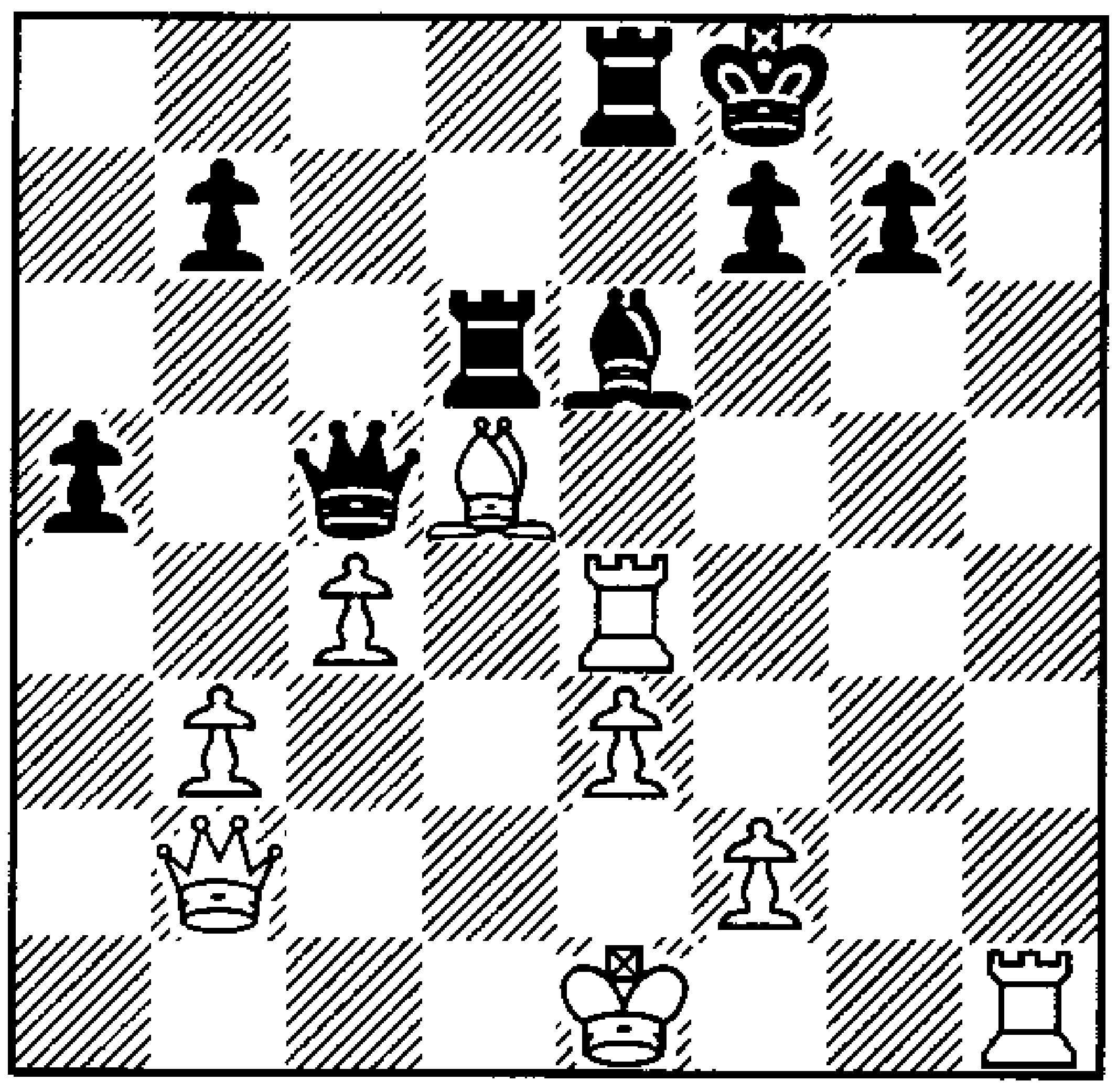
A tenacious defence, although a question mark was attached to this move! 'In a difficult position, aggravated by time-trouble, Black, who up till now had defended very tenaciously, makes an irreparable mistake. 27...♖ad8 was better, when White would have had to go into a queen ending with an extra pawn: 28 ♗xe6! ♖xd4 29 ♖h8+ ♔e7 30 ♖xe8+ ♔xe8 31 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 32 exd4 ♕b4+ 33 ♔d1 a4 34 ♔c2.' (Panov) But in the computer era the problem is solved far more dramatically and simply: 29 ♕xd4! ♕xd4 (also bad is 29...♕b4+ 30 ♔e2 fxe6 31 ♖h8+ ♔f7 32 ♕f4+ ♔e7 33 ♕c7+) 30 ♖h8+ ♔e7 31 ♖xe8+ ♔xe8 32 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 33 exd4 with a won pawn ending.

And if 27...♕b4+ 28 ♔e2 ♖a6 the computer finds a no less interesting geometrical win: 29 ♗xe6 ♖axe6 30 ♖d5! f6 31 ♖b5 ♕e7 32 ♕d2 b6 33 ♖xb6!! (very pretty!) 33...♖xb6 34 ♖h8+ ♔f7 35 ♕d5+ ♕e6 36 ♕h5+.

28 ♖e4! (with the threat of ♖h8+) **28...♖d6?**

But this is indeed the consequence of time-trouble. Also bad is 28...g6? 29 ♖h8+ ♔e7 30 ♗xe6 ♖xe6 31 ♖xe6+ fxe6 32 ♖h7+ ♔d6 33 ♕d2+ ♔e5 34 ♕c3+ ♔e4 35 ♖f7 winning.

'28...♔g8 fails to 29 ♖g1.' (Panov) However, this was the best defence, since after 29...♕f8! there appears to be no direct win for White: 30 ♗xb7 ♖b6 31 ♗d5 ♖eb8 32 ♗xe6 ♖xb3 33 ♗xf7+ ♕xf7 34 ♖e8+! ♖xe8 35 ♕xb3 with an advantage that still has to be converted. Therefore the computer's recommendation, rather a complicated one for a practical game, comes into consideration: 29 f4!? (inaccurate is 29 ♖eh4 f6!) 29...♕b4+ 30 ♔f1, for example: 30...f5 31 ♖g1 ♕f8 32 ♖xe6 ♖axe6 33 ♕e5 ♕f7 34 ♗xe6 ♖xe6 35 ♖xg7+, or 30...♖d6 31 ♕h2 ♔f8 32 ♕h8+ ♔e7 33 ♕xg7 ♔d8 34 ♗xe6 fxe6 35 ♖d4 ♖xd4 36 ♕xd4+ ♔c8 37 ♖h5 and wins.



29 ♖h7! (the remainder is now simple) **29...♔e7**

There is nothing better: 29...g6 30 ♕g7+ ♔e7 31 ♖xe6+, or 29...f6 30 ♖h8+; 29...♕b4+ 30 ♔e2 ♖xd5 31 ♕xg7+ ♔e7 32 ♕xf7+ ♔d8 33 ♕c7 mate.

30 ♕xg7 ♔d8 31 ♗xe6 fxe6 (31...♖dxe6 32 ♕xf7) **32 ♕xb7 ♕b4+ 33 ♕xb4 axb4 34 c5 ♖c6 35 ♖xb4 ♖xc5 36 ♖a7 1-0**

Hinting at 36...♖c8? 37 ♖d4 – an epaulette mate! Here Black resigned.

The champion had clearly warmed up! After this excellent win Capablanca took the lead and he possibly thought that later too everything would go so smoothly: draws with Black, wins with White...

However, in the ninth game a slight disappointment awaited him: from the opening he would have seized the initiative, but with a series of precise moves Alekhine brilliantly solved some rather difficult problems. This was the first symptom of the imminent turning-point. Alekhine's wins in the 11th and 12th games (*Game Nos.125 and 126*) took him into the lead – 3-2, and undermined Capablanca's confidence in his ultimate success. 'I am not doing as well as I expected,' he wrote at that time to a friend in New York. 'I believe, however, that should another match be arranged in New York, for, say, the beginning of 1929, I could do much better... Should the match here end in a draw, I suggest that the next match be limited to twenty games...'

These impressive wins influenced the evaluation of the further course of the match: in chess literature the opinion was expressed that Alekhine, despite isolated failures, confidently 'sailed' to the champion's title – especially since he won the 21st game in splendid style, increasing his lead to 4-2.

But to me the picture seems somewhat different. After his defeats in the 11th and 12th games Capablanca came down to earth, gathered his strength and began making draws, in order to gradually come to, get back to his best and begin a new offensive (this resembles Lasker's strategy in the 1921 match: the main thing being to hold on!).

After four successive draws he had completely calmed down, but the 17th game again upset him. After letting slip an enormous positional advantage, he angrily said: 'If I can't win *such* a game, I will also not win the match...' With two respite draws he regained his calm, but then came the 20th game, in which he seized the initiative, won the exchange and... barely escaped with a draw (*Game No.127*). Alekhine was playing very strongly! I think that Capablanca was shocked, at any event he played very badly in the 21st game, whereas Alekhine's play was again very strong (*Game No.128*).

'By inertia' Capa also nearly lost the 22nd game. Alekhine conducted it with great verve, but in a difficult endgame he missed a win (at the end the Cuban defended brilliantly – *Game No.129*). And here, it seems to me, a new phase of the match began: the challenger faded, whereas the champion, realising that the loss of his title was now a reality, revived and began playing with increasing power. After four relatively quiet draws the most interesting events began.

In the next five games Capablanca held the initiative. The fact that Alekhine capitulated only once appears simply miraculous! The main talking-point was the Cuban's blunder in the completely won 27th game.

Game 105
J.R.Capablanca-A.Alekhine
World Championship Match,
Buenos Aires 1927, 27th game
Queen's Gambit D65

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♘bd7 5 e3 ♗e7 6 ♘f3 0-0 7 ♖c1 (another opening *tabiya* of this match) **7...a6!?** (Capa himself upheld 7...c6) **8 cxd5**

The classic Carlsbad Variation. From games 13-21 Capablanca played 8 a3 (*Game*

No.128).

8...exd5 9 ♗d3 c6 10 ♕c2!

The 23rd game went 10 0-0 ♘e8 11 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 12 e4?! dxe4 13 ♘xe4 ♘df6 14 ♕c2 ♘xe4 15 ♗xe4 ♘f6 16 ♗f5 ♗xf5 17 ♕xf5 ♖ad8 18 ♖fe1 ♕b4 19 ♕c2 ♖fe8 with excellent play for Black.

10...h6

10...♖e8 11 0-0 ♘f8 is more solid, for example: 12 ♖fe1 (12 ♖b1 and b2-b4 is also of current interest) 12...♗e6 13 ♘a4 ♘6d7 14 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 15 ♘c5 ♘xc5 16 ♕xc5 ♕c7 17 b4 (25th game), and here Alekhine recommended 17...♖ad8! 18 ♘e5 ♘d7 or 18 ♘d2 ♗g4 and ...♗h5-g6 with equal chances in each instance.

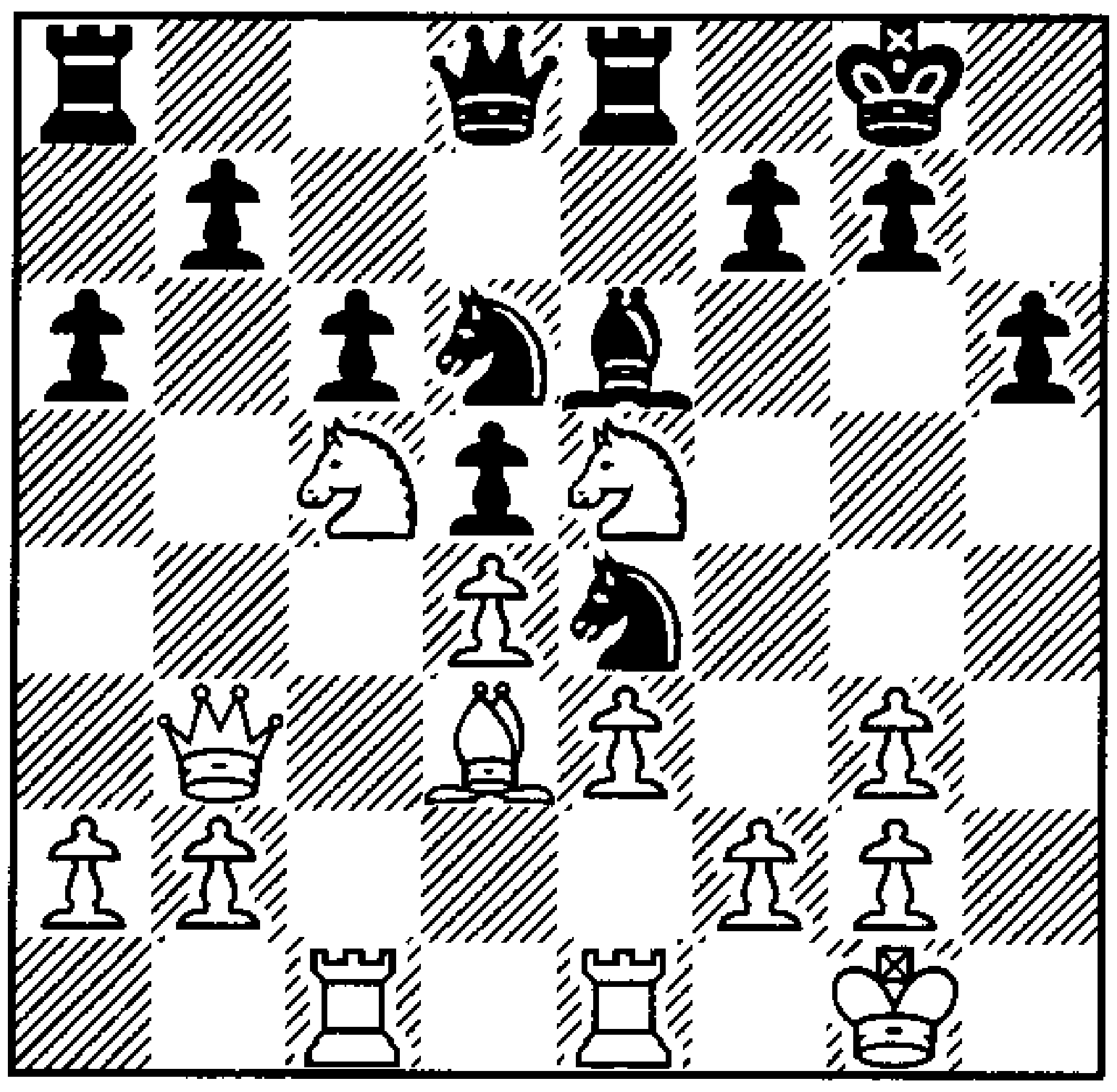
11 ♗h4 ♘e8

After 11...♖e8 the inclusion of ...h7-h6 merely makes it harder for Black to equalise.

12 ♗g3 ♗d6 13 0-0 ♗xg3 14 hxg3 ♘d6 15 ♘a4!

The weakness of the opponent's queenside gives White a small but enduring positional advantage.

15...♖e8 16 ♖fe1 ♘f6?! (according to Alekhine, 16...♘f8 was better, leaving the f6-square free for the queen) **17 ♘e5 ♘fe4 18 ♕b3! ♗e6 19 ♘c5!**



19...♘xc5?

'A gross error; 19...♕f6! was correct.' (Alekhine) After 20 ♗xe4 dxe4 21 ♘xe6 (21 ♕b6 ♖e7) 21...♕xe6 22 ♕xe6 ♖xe6 23 ♘d7! ♖d8 24 ♘b6 this would have left Black with an inferior but defensible endgame.

20 dxc5 ♘b5 21 a4 ♘c7

With an elementary trap: 22 ♕xb7?? ♗c8!

22 ♗b1!

An accurate and timely decision. 'Capablanca unexpectedly switches to an attack on Black's weakened kingside. The coordination of White's pieces is as good as that of Black's is bad!' (Panov)

22...♗c8

Sadly necessary: after 22...♕f6? a pawn is lost: 23 ♕xb7! ♕xe5 24 f4 ♕f6 25 ♕xc7.

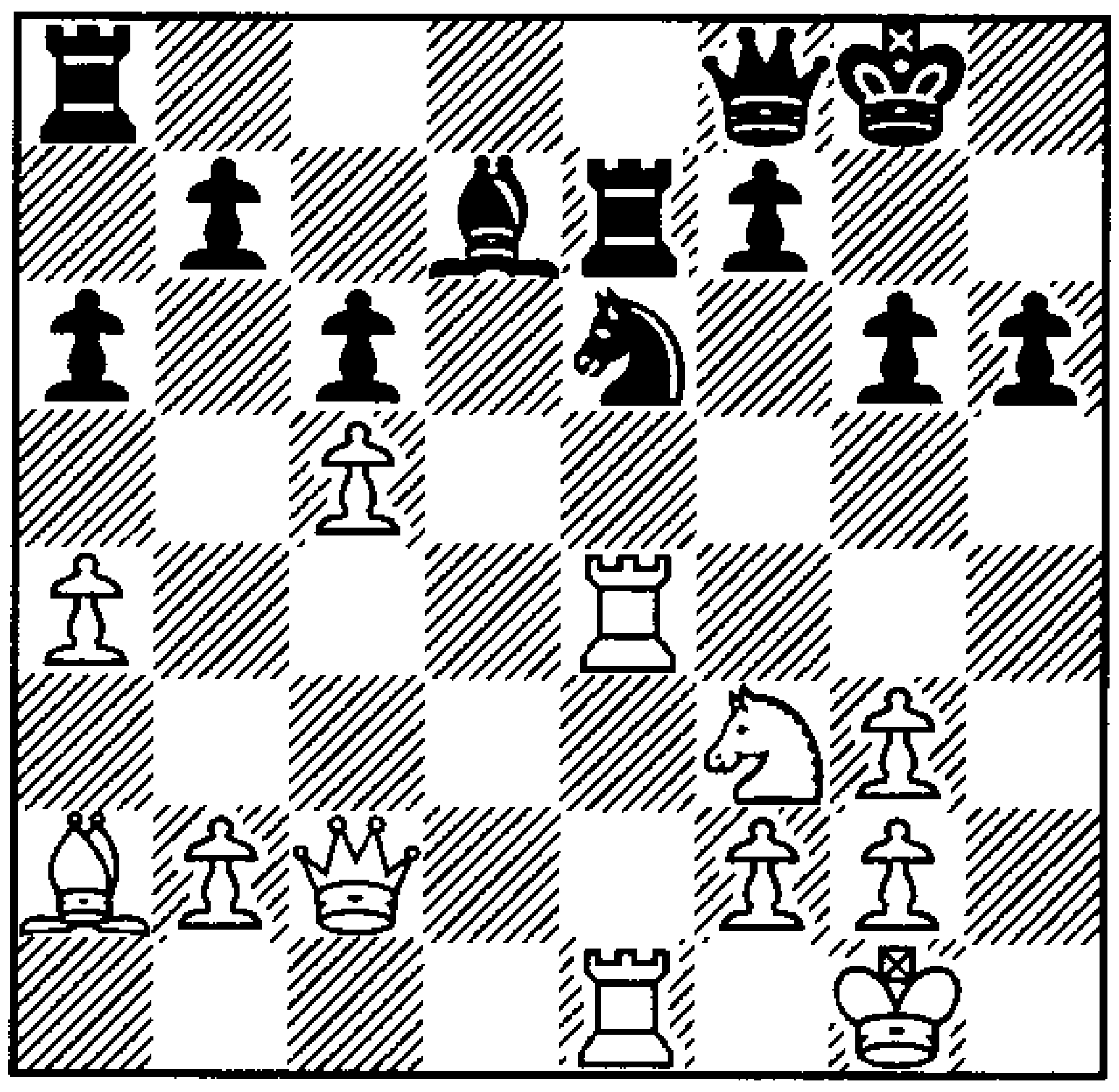
23 ♘f3 ♘e6 24 e4!

White's advantage becomes threatening: by opening the position, he quickly mobilises all his forces for the concluding assault.

24...dxe4 (in the event of 24...d4 this pawn would not have survived for long) **25 ♖xe4 ♖e7?!**

25...♘c7 and ...♘d5 was more tenacious.

26 ♖ce1 ♗d7 (but not 26...♘xc5?? 27 ♖xe7 ♘xb3 28 ♖e8+ and mate) **27 ♕c2 g6 28 ♗a2! ♕f8**



29 ♘e5! (the decisive blow: Black's defences begin to crack) **29...♕g7**

Or 29...♗e8 30 ♘xg6!

30 ♘xd7 ♖xd7 31 ♗xe6 fxe6 32 ♖g4

After gaining a completely winning position and anticipating Black's inevitable capitulation, Capa loses the thread a little. In Soultanbéieff's opinion, 32 ♖xe6 ♔h7 33 ♖d6! was more convincing, for example: 33...♖ad8 34 ♖ee6 ♖xd6 35 cxd6 ♖d7 36 ♕e4 winning.

32...♔h7 33 ♖xe6 ♖g8 34 ♕e4!

'The win of the queen and a pawn for two rooks by 34 ♖xg6 would have greatly prolonged the game.' (Panov) Now it would appear that nothing can stop the efficient world champion, who has completely destroyed the challenger's position. But in battles at the top one must always be prepared for miracles, and until the opponent stops the clocks, the game is not over...

34...♖f7 35 f4!

With the terrible threat of 36 f5! ♖xf5 37 ♖gxg6 ♕xg6 38 ♖xg6 ♔xg6 39 g4 and wins.

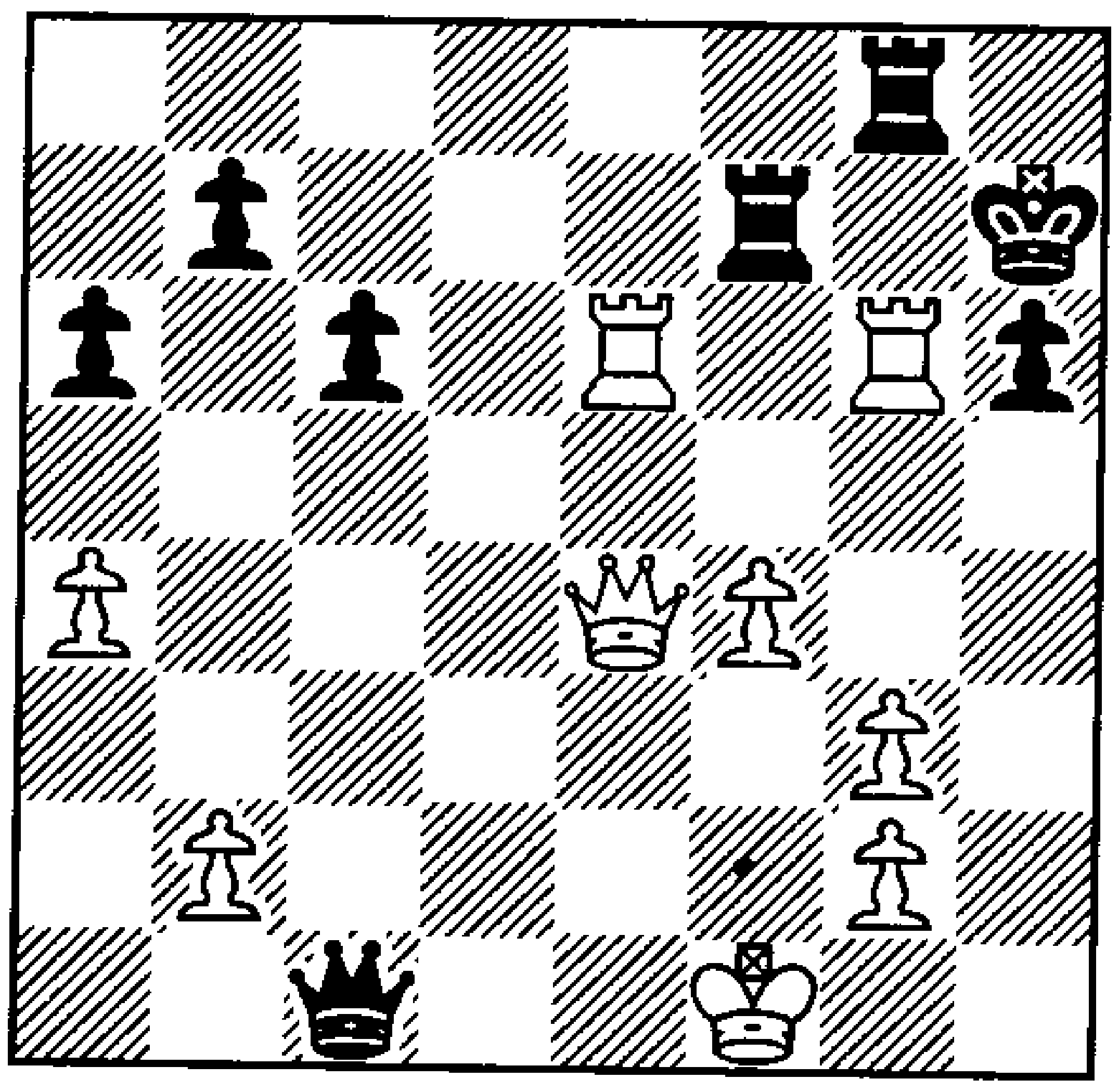
35...♕f8

'With a last faint hope that Capablanca will fall into a trap... 35...♖f6 36 ♖e7 ♖f7 37 ♖xg6! was also bad.' (Panov)

36 ♖gxg6

In a calm frame of mind Capa would most probably have chosen a longer, but safer path to his goal – 36 b4, defending the c5-pawn. Then there would not have been anything to devise, and the champion would have 'automatically' converted his advantage into a win. Thus after, say, 36...♖f5 37 ♖gxg6! ♖xg6 38 ♖xg6 ♔xg6 39 g4 White gains a won pawn ending: 39...h5 40 ♕xf5+ ♕xf5 41 gxf5+ ♔xf5 42 g3 h4 43 ♔f2 ♔g4 44 gxh4 ♔xf4 45 h5 ♔g5 46 ♔e3 ♔xh5 47 ♔f4 with the triumphal march of the king to c7.

36...♕xc5+ 37 ♔f1 (but not 37 ♔h2?? ♕h5+) **37...♕c1+**



38 ♔f2??

'Throwing away the win, which had been achieved by truly brilliant play!' (Panov) 'When he captured on g6 on move 36, Capablanca simply overlooked the check on c5. This oversight, which in itself did not matter, nonetheless made him so nervous that straight afterwards, without thinking about it, he made the decisive error...' (Alekhine)

Moving one square to the left – 38 ♔e2! could have changed the course (and even the outcome) of the match: after 38...♕xb2+ 39 ♔f3 ♕b3+ (39...♕c3+ 40 ♔g4) 40 ♔f2! (avoiding the trap 40 ♔g4?? ♕xe6+! 41 ♕xe6 ♖xg6+) 40...♕b2+ 41 ♔g1 ♕c1+ 42 ♔h2 the king would have found shelter and Black would have had to resign.

38...♕d2+! ½-½

Perpetual check cannot be avoided: 39 ♔g1 (39 ♔f3 ♕d1+) 39...♕d1+ 40 ♔f2 (40 ♔h2?? ♕h5+) 40...♕d2+.

Here, in my view, what told was not only extreme fatigue with a 'mental black-out' (as one of the commentators expressed it), but also Capablanca's inveterate habit of trying to convert an advantage while avoiding the calculation of any variations that were in the least complicated (remember his match with Lasker!).

The things that were written about this game! It was called both the decisive one in the match, and a fatal one for the champion... 'The consequences of Capablanca's tragic mistake predetermined the outcome of the entire match.' (Panov) But in my opinion, although Capa was in a state of shock, his main mistake was still to come. And for the moment he was continuing to press his opponent with all his remaining strength.

In the 28th game, where a sharp, multi-piece endgame was reached, Alekhine ran short of time and ended up in a critical position: White inevitably lost a pawn. In an effort to save the game, he thought over his sealed move for 1 hour 50 minutes (a record for the match!) and on the resumption he twice more found the only moves... And here, after thinking for 40 minutes, Capablanca unexpectedly offered a draw!

The 29th game was no less dramatic. One version has it that Alekhine thoroughly exhausted his opponent by his tenacious defence in a very difficult position. He did indeed defend brilliantly, but he nevertheless lost the game...

Game 106

J.R.Capablanca-A.Alekhine

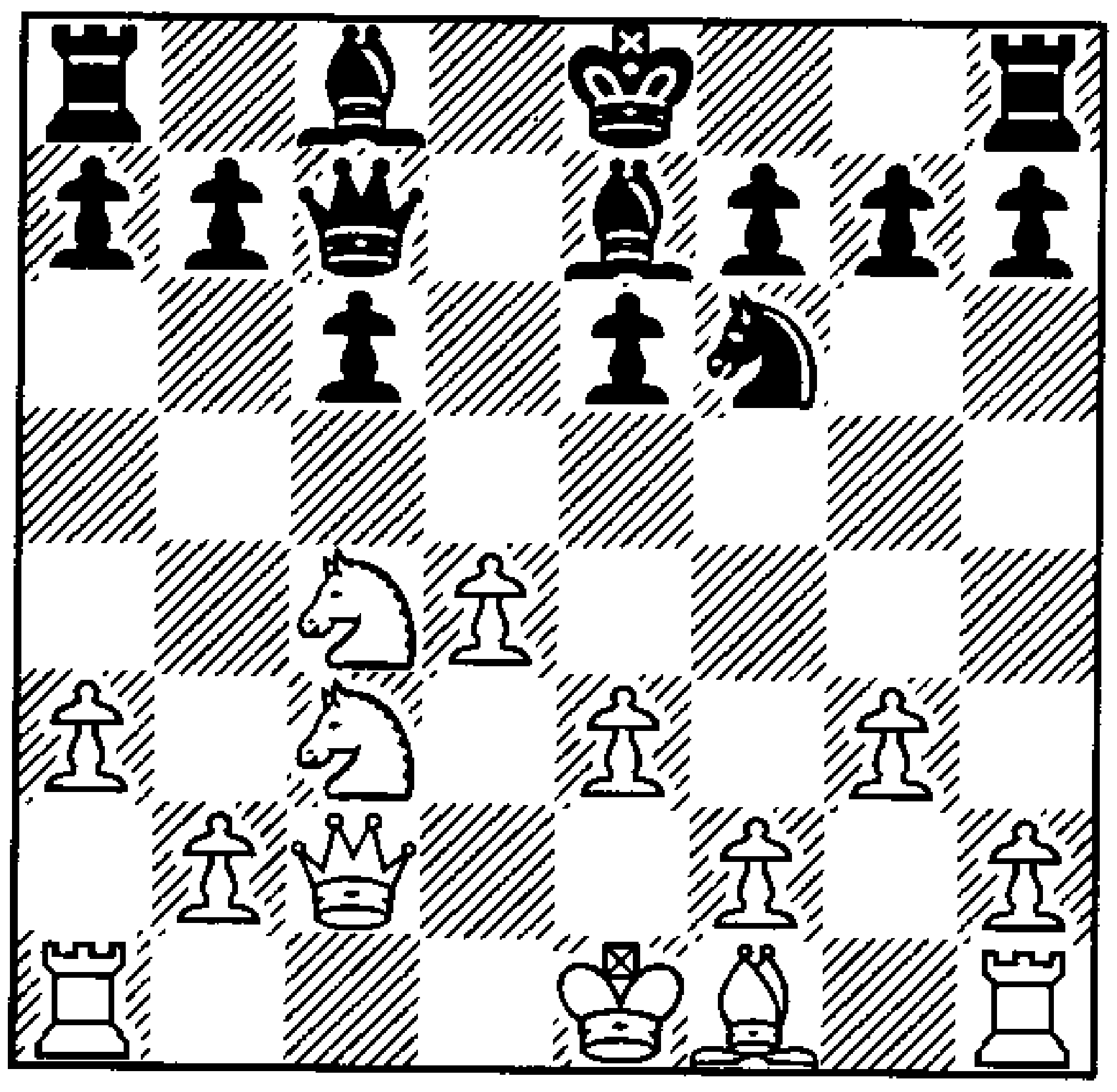
World Championship Match,
Buenos Aires 1927, 29th game
Queen's Gambit D52

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♘bd7 5 e3 c6 6 ♘f3 ♕a5 7 ♘d2 ♗b4 8 ♕c2 dxc4

Apparently the challenger was not inspired by 8...0-0 9 ♗h4!? (*Game No.104*).

9 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 10 ♘xc4 ♕c7 11 a3 (11 g3!?) **11...♗e7 12 g3!?**

A new move! In the 11th game 12 ♗e2 was played (*Game No.125*).



12...0-0

12...c5!? comes into consideration, and if 13 ♘b5 – 13...♕c6! (more passive is 13...♕b8 14 dxc5 ♗xc5 15 ♖d1! 0-0 16 ♗g2 with some advantage) 14 ♘e5 ♕xh1 15 ♘c7+ ♔f8 16 ♘xa8 b6, seizing the initiative. While after 13 ♗g2 (13 dxc5 ♗xc5 14 b4 ♗e7 15 ♘b5 ♕b8 16 ♘cd6+ ♗xd6 17 ♕xc8+ ♕xc8 18 ♘xd6+ ♔e7 19 ♘xc8+ ♖axc8 is level) 13...♗d7 14 ♘e5 cxd4 15 exd4 0-0 Black has no reason to complain (Levenfish-Chistyakov, Leningrad 1939).

13 ♗g2 ♗d7

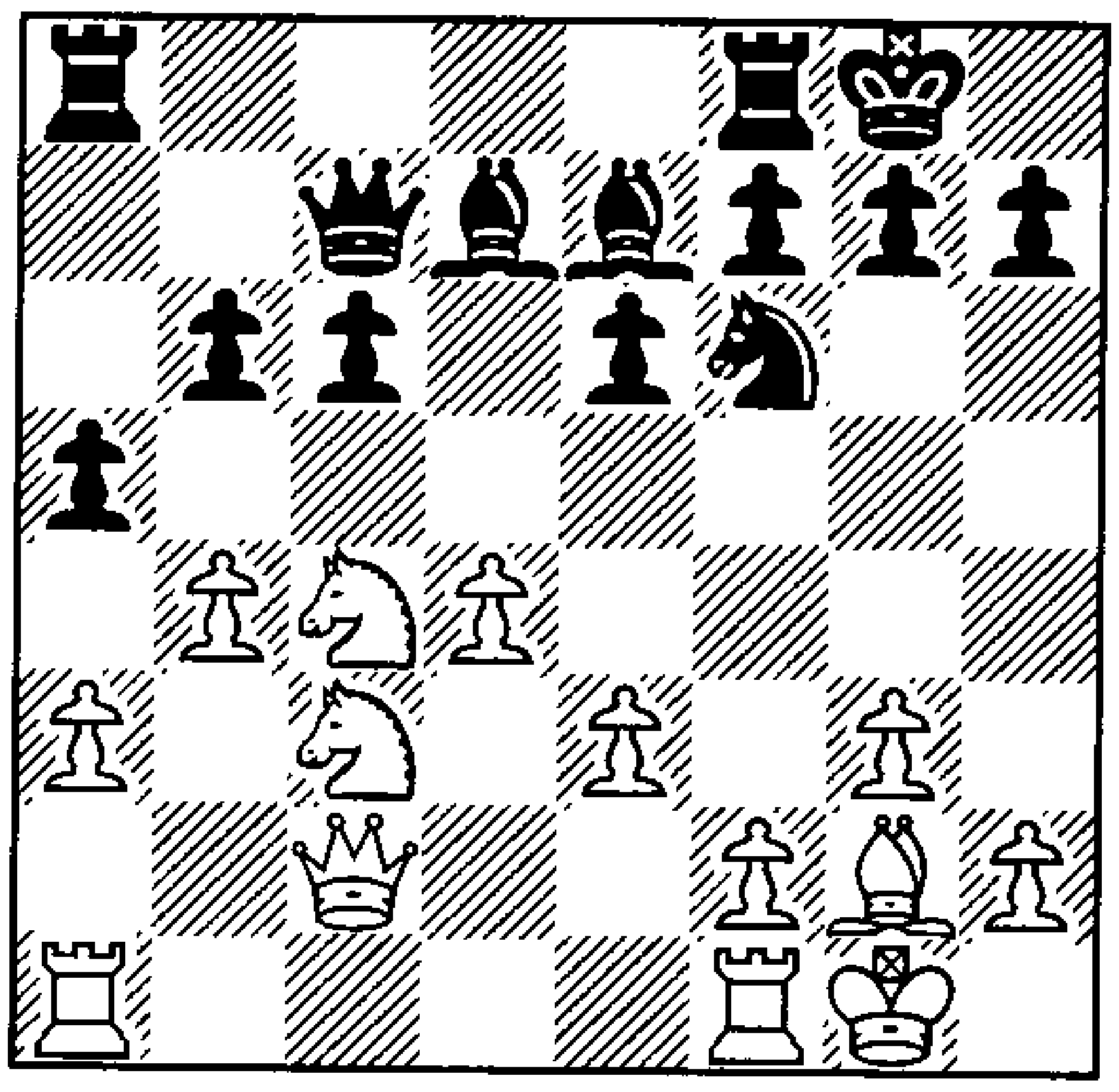
Capablanca recommended 13...b6?, but after 14 ♘e5! ♗b7 15 ♘b5 ♕c8 16 ♘xc6 Black loses a pawn.

14 b4! (14 0-0 c5!) **14...b6**

White has the advantage after 14...♘d5 15 0-0 ♘xc3 16 ♕xc3 ♖fd8 (Alekhine-Bogoljubow, Bad Nauheim 1936) 17 ♖fc1! and ♖ab1.

15 0-0 a5?!

'A careless move, which I had already rejected in the 11th game because of very similar variations.' (Alekhine) Capablanca's suggestion 15...♖ab8 16 ♖fb1 c5?! 17 dxc5 bxc5 18 b5! is of instructional value. Modern theory recommends 15...♖ac8 (followed by ...♖fd8 and ...♗e8), although even here after 16 ♖fc1 ♖fd8 17 ♖ab1 White has a small but enduring advantage.



16 ♘e5!

'An energetic reply.' (Kotov) 'The only move by which White firmly maintains the advantage.' (Panov) And indeed, weaker is 16 bxa5 (16 b5? ♖ac8!; 16 ♖ab1? axb4 17 axb4 ♖a7!; 16 ♕b3? axb4 17 axb4 ♘d5!) 16...b5! 17 ♘e5 ♖xa5 18 a4! bxa4! 19 ♘xa4 c5 20 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 with equality.

16...axb4 17 axb4

17 ♘b5!?, a move that was not mentioned

by anyone, in interesting, for example: 17...♕c8 18 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 19 ♗xc6 ♖ac8 20 ♖ac1 ♕d8 21 axb4 ♗xb4 22 ♕b3 with definite pressure.

17...♖xa1

17...♗xb4?! was bad because of 18 ♘b5! ♕c8 (or 18...♕b7 19 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 20 ♗xc6 ♖ac8 21 ♖fc1) 19 ♘a7! (Becker suggested 19 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 20 ♗xc6! ♗xc6 21 ♘xc6 ♗a5 22 ♖a1, but after 20...♖c8! 21 ♘xd7 ♕xc6 22 ♘xf6+ gxf6 23 ♕e2 ♕e4 all is not clear) 19...♕e8 20 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 21 ♗xc6 ♖d8 22 ♖fb1 with an overwhelming advantage.

18 ♖xa1 ♖c8!

18...♗xb4? was again bad: 19 ♘b5 ♕c8 20 ♗xc6! (Capablanca) 20...♗xc6 21 ♘xc6 ♕d7 22 ♖a7 ♕d5 23 ♘c7 ♕d6 24 ♕c4 wins, while 18...c5?! 19 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 20 dxc5 bxc5 21 b5 gives White a powerful passed pawn.

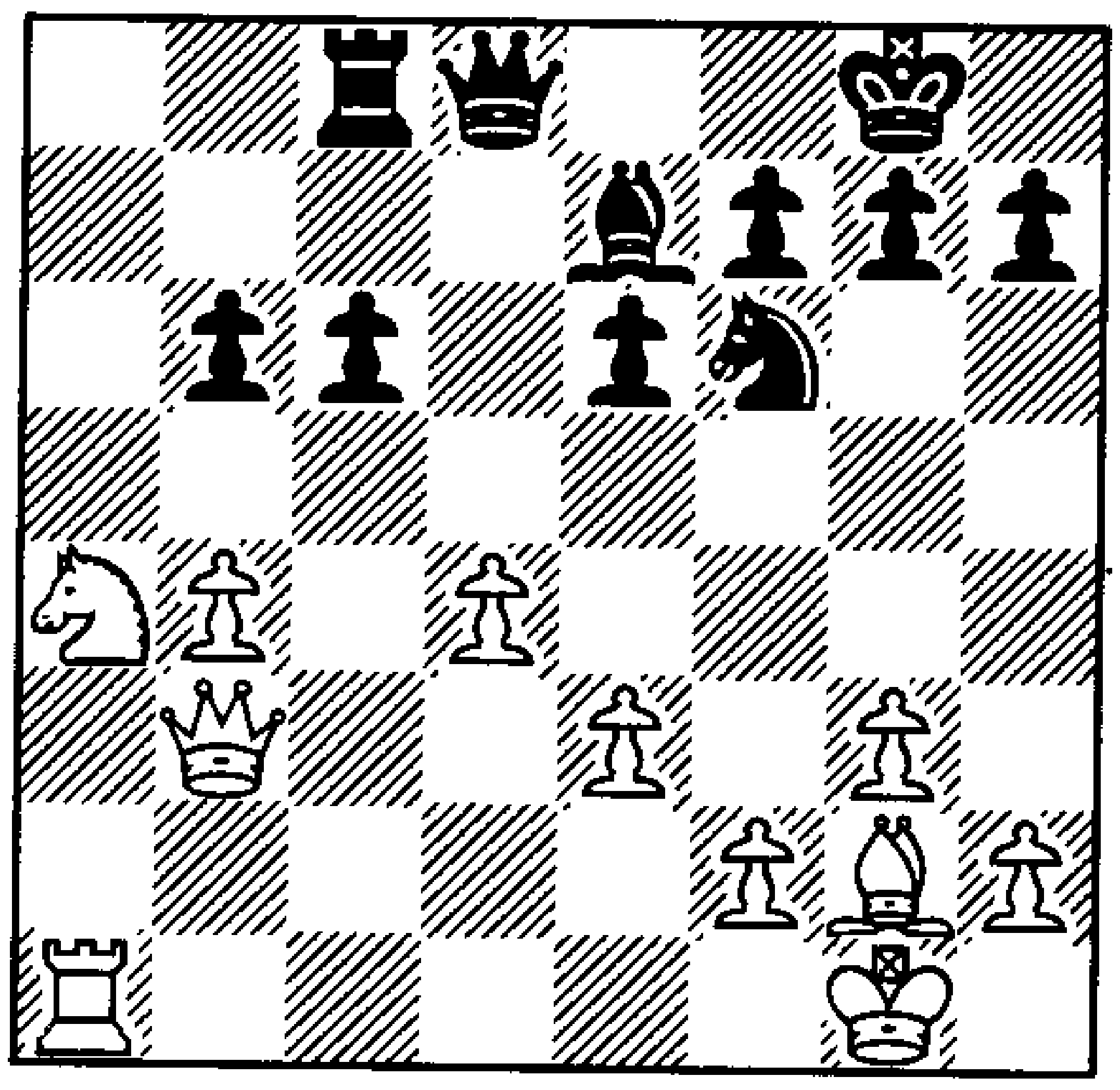
19 ♘xd7 ♕xd7?!

'Capablanca pointed out that 19...♘xd7, defending the b6-pawn, was better, although after 20 ♕b3 White would still have retained the advantage.' (Panov) Even so, Black's position would have been quite tolerable.

20 ♘a4!

The start of some subtle manoeuvres aimed at destroying the opponent's queenside.

20...♕d8 (according to Kotov, better chances of a defence were offered by 20...♗d8 21 ♖c1 ♘d5 22 ♗xd5 exd5 23 b5 c5 24 dxc5 ♕xb5) **21 ♕b3!** (of course, not 21 ♗xc6? ♗xb4 equalising)



21...♘d5?!

21...c5? 22 bxc5 bxc5 23 dxc5 ♗xc5 24 ♗b7! was bad for Black, but Capablanca's recommendation of 21...b5! 22 ♘c5 ♗xc5 23 bxc5 ♖a8 (if 23...♘d5, then 24 ♖a6) was stronger. According to Panov, this loses to 24 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 25 ♕xb5 cxb5 26 ♗xa8 b4 27 ♗f3 b3 28 ♗d1 b2 29 ♗c2 ♔f8 30 e4 'and the white king approaches the b2-pawn,' but in my opinion, after 30...♔e7 31 ♔f1 ♔d7 32 ♔e2 ♔c6 33 f4 (33 ♔d2 e5!) 33...♔b5 34 ♔d3 ♔b4 35 ♗b1 ♘e8 things are closer to a draw.

22 b5! cxb5?!

Again a dubious move, leading to the loss of the b6-pawn and indeed to an unpleasant position. Capablanca, and after him Panov and Kotov, condemn 22...c5 because of 23 dxc5 bxc5 (23...♗xc5? 24 ♖d1!) 24 ♕c4. But it seems to me that after 24...♕a5 25 ♖b1 ♖b8 26 h4 ♘b4 27 ♘c3 ♗f6 28 ♗f1 White's advantage is not so great and that Black can still resist.

23 ♕xb5 ♖a8

The commentators attached an exclamation mark to this move and called it 'a very resourceful defence.' And indeed 23...♖b8?! was more passive: 24 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 25 ♕xd5 exd5 26 ♖b1 b5 (26...♗d8 27 ♖b5) 27 ♘c3 b4 28 ♘xd5 ♗d6 29 ♖b3 and e3-e4-e5 (Becker). But I think that better chances of a draw were offered by going into an ending with opposite-coloured bishops: 23...♘c3!? 24 ♕xb6 (the widely recommended variation 24 ♘xc3 ♖xc3 25 ♗c6 is no better in view of 25...♗a3!) 24...♘xa4 25 ♕xd8+ ♗xd8 26 ♖xa4 ♖c1+ 27 ♗f1 ♔f8.

Now, however, White wins a pawn while retaining his queen and knight, reaching what is probably a technically won position.

24 ♖c1! (but not 24 ♖b1? ♖xa4! 25 ♕xa4 ♘c3 equalising) **24...♖a5 25 ♕c6 ♗a3**

Weak is 25...b5?! 26 ♗xd5! (26 ♕b7 ♗f8) 26...exd5 27 ♘c5 ♕a8 28 ♕d7 and totally bad is 25...♘b4? 26 ♕b7! ♗f8 27 ♘xb6 ♖b5 28 ♖c8 ♕d6 (28...♕xb6 29 ♕e7) 29 ♘c4 winning.

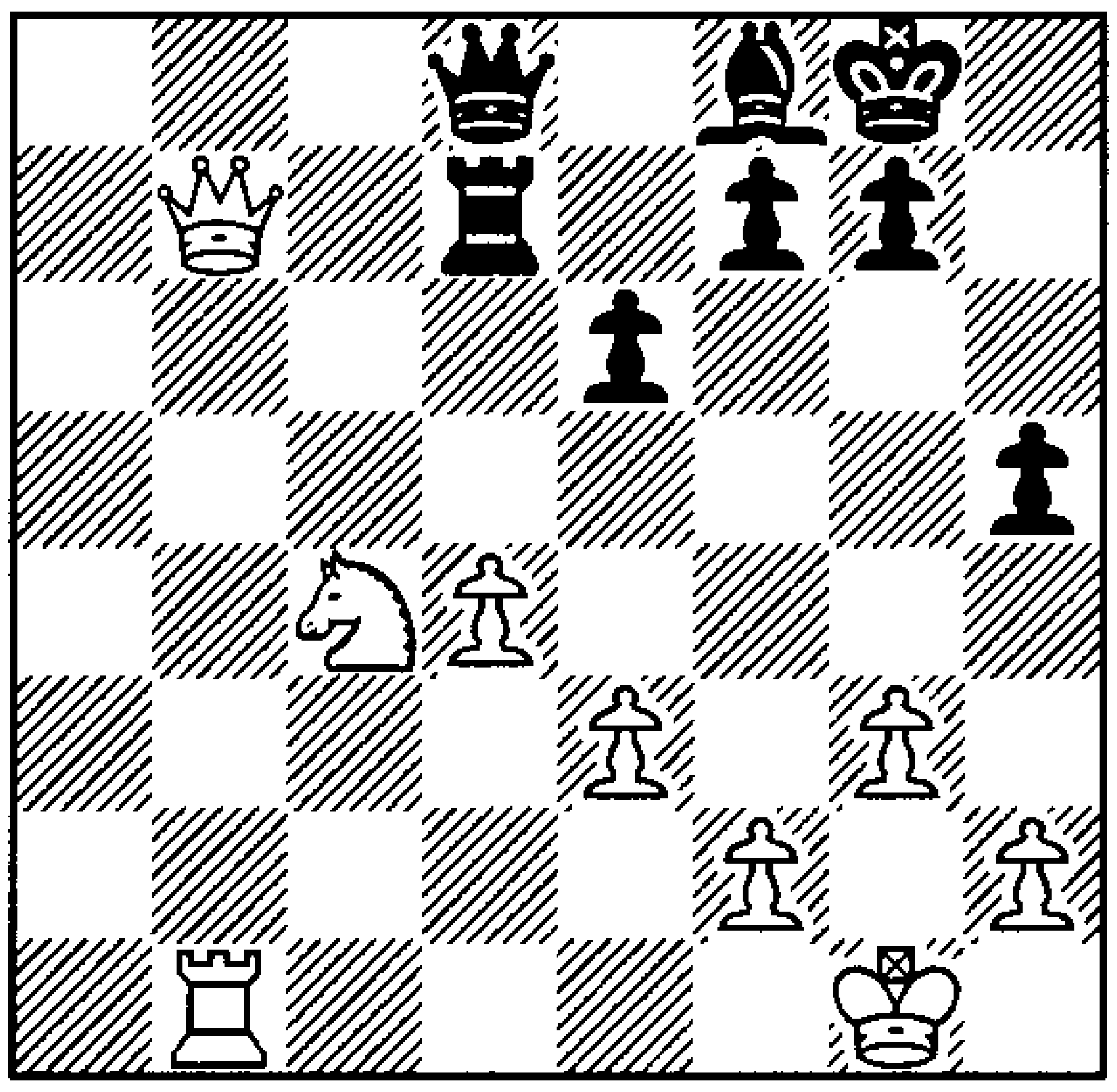
26 ♖b1 ♗f8

Threatening ...♖xa4. Neither 26... ♖xa4? 27 ♕xa4 ♘c3 28 ♕xa3 ♘xb1 29 ♕b2 nor 26...b5? 27 ♘c5 ♗xc5 28 dxc5 ♘e7 29 ♕b6 will do.

27 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 28 ♘xb6

'After the opponent's exemplary exploitation of the weaknesses, Black has lost a pawn.' (Alekhine) But not yet the game...

28...♖d6 29 ♕b7 h5 (generally speaking, 29...h6 is more solid) **30 ♘c4 ♖d7**



31 ♕e4

31 ♕f3!? ♖c7 32 ♘e5 is also interesting. It is pointless to try and exhaust the given position by variations – it seems to me that objectively it is closer to a loss for Black than to a draw. With the given pawn formation, any endgame is difficult: queen, rook, or even knight against bishop (a similar ending, but with four pawns against three, was won by White, for example, in the game Khalifman-Barua, Las Vegas 2nd matchgame 1999).

31...♖c7 32 ♘e5 ♕c8 33 ♔g2 ♗d6 34 ♖a1 ♖b7

But not 34...♕b7? 35 ♖a8+ ♗f8 36 ♕xb7 ♖xb7 37 ♖d8! and ♘d7 and wins.

35 ♘d3 g6 36 ♖a6 ♗f8 37 ♖c6 (with the idea of 38 ♘c5 ♗xc5 39 dxc5) **37...♖c7! 38 ♖xc7**

'Capablanca incorrectly suggests that 38 ♘e5 would have won. Then with 38...♕b7 39 ♕f3 ♗g7 Black would have achieved a position very similar to that which occurred in the game.' (Alekhine)

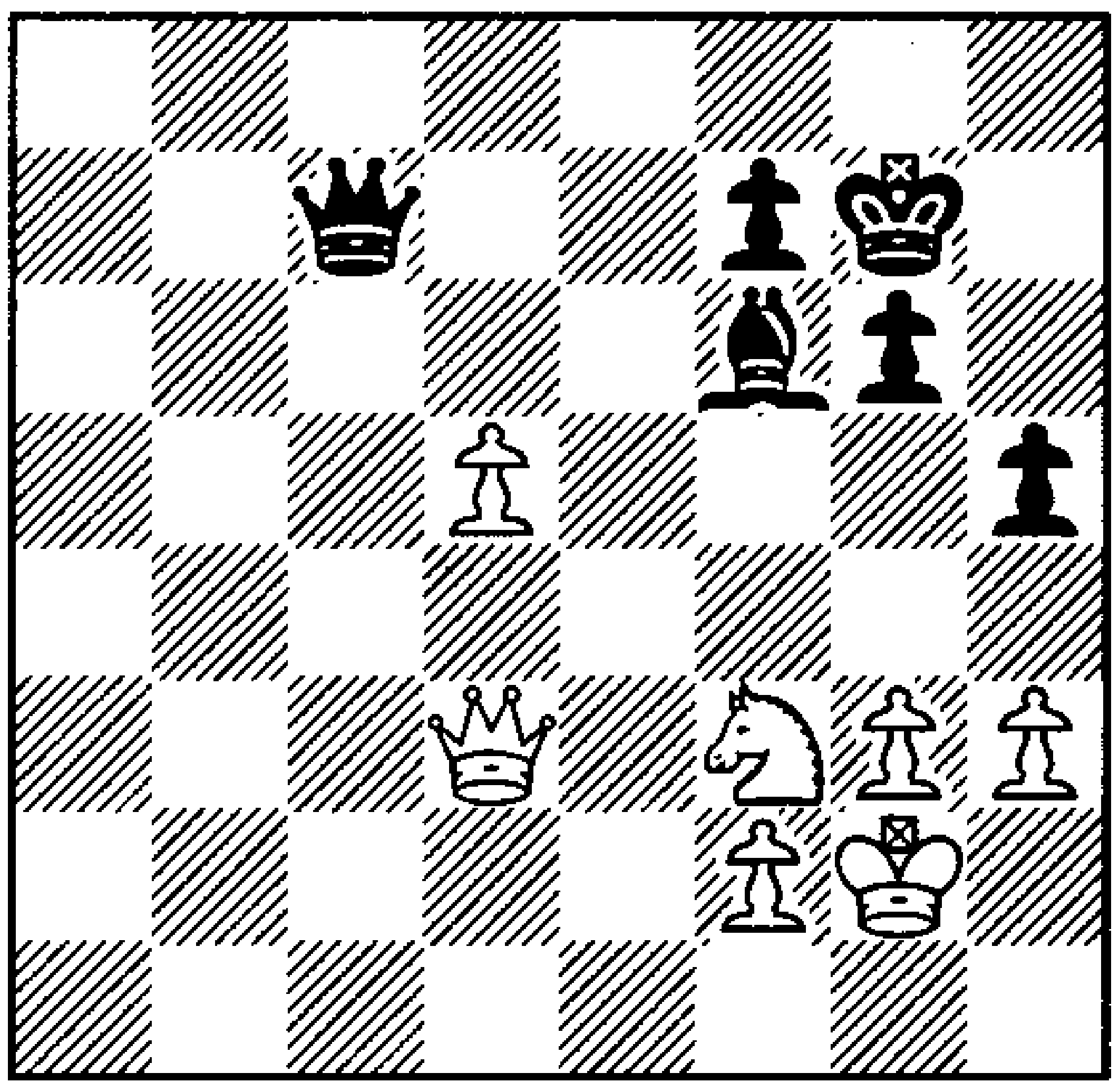
38...♕xc7 39 ♘e5 ♗g7 (defending against ♘xg6) **40 ♕a8+ ♔h7 41 ♘f3 ♗f6**

And now 42 ♘g5+ ♔h6 43 h4 and ♕g8! was threatened.

42 ♕a6 (if 42 ♕f8, then 42...♕e7) **42...♔g7 43 ♕d3**

White has chosen the most straightforward plan: the creation of a passed pawn on the d-file. But the paradoxical thing is that in the process his advantage gradually evaporates! Perhaps he shouldn't have exchanged rooks and been in a hurry to advance his pawns...

43...♕b7 44 e4 ♕c6 45 h3 ♕c7 46 d5 (according to Alekhine, there is no time for 46 ♘d2 in view of 46...h4!) **46...exd5 47 exd5**



47...♕c3!

This move, which was underestimated by the champion, delighted the commentators: the challenger had precisely calculated that without the queens Black should gain a draw, whereas after 47...♕d6 48 ♕c4 ♕f8 49 ♘d4 his position could have become critical.

48 ♕xc3

'Also after 48 ♕e4 ♕c5! a win for White would hardly have been possible.' (Alekhine) Better, perhaps, was 48 ♕d1!? ♕c7 49 d6 ♕c6 50 d7 ♗d8 51 ♕d4+ ♔g8, although even here it is hard to believe that White can win.

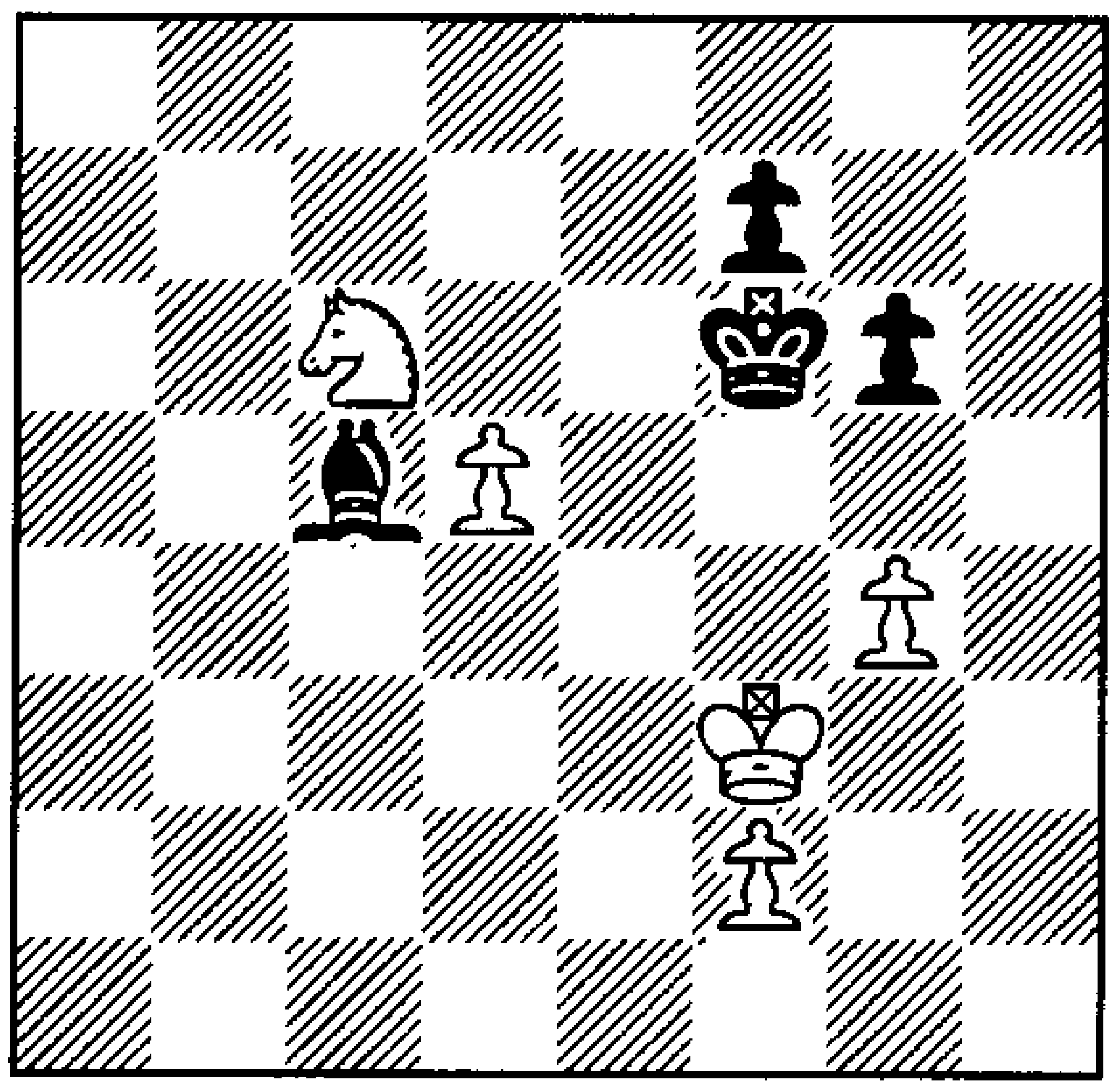
48...♗xc3 49 ♔f1! (49 ♘g5 f5!) **49...♔f6 50 ♔e2 ♗b4! 51 ♘d4!**

'Capablanca plays the endgame with his typical accuracy, playing his knight to the strong square c6. If 51 ♔d3 there would have followed 51...♗c5 52 ♘d4 ♔e5.' (Kotov)

51...♗c5 (only not 51...♔e5?? 52 ♘c6+) **52 ♘c6 ♔f5! 53 ♔f3**

Or 53 f3 ♗d6 54 g4+ hxg4 55 hxg4+ ♔f4 drawing.

53...♔f6! 54 g4!? (the last chance) **54...hxg4+ 55 hxg4**



55...♔g5??

'A blunder, which nullifies all Black's fine preceding work.' (Kotov) 'Tired by his laborious, exhausting defence against the endgame virtuoso, Alekhine makes two mistakes, one after another, and unexpectedly loses.' (Panov)

As all the commentators pointed out, a simple draw would have been given by 55...♗d6! (Alekhine also gave 55...♗b6!? with a draw), for example: 56 ♔e4 ♔g5! 57 ♘e5 (57 f3 f5+ 58 gxf5 gxf5+ 59 ♔e3 ♗c5+) 57...f5+ 58 gxf5 gxf5+ 59 ♔d4 ♔f4, 56 ♘d8 ♗c7 57 g5+ ♔xg5 58 ♘xf7+ ♔f6 59 d6 ♗b6, or 56 ♔e2 ♔g5 57 ♘d8 ♗c7 58 ♘xf7+ (58 ♘b7 ♗b6 59 f3 f5) 58...♔f6 59 d6 ♗b6 60 ♘h8 g5.

56 ♘e5! ♗d4?!

Capitulation. 'When I made the incorrect king move, which, as it seemed to me, was the easiest way to draw after 56...f5, I simply overlooked the study-like continuation 57 d6! fxg4+ 58 ♔g2!' (Alekhine) Followed by 58...♔f5 59 d7 ♗e7 60 ♘c6 winning.

Also bad was 56...♔f6? 57 ♘d7+ or 56...f6? 57 ♘f7+ followed by the advance of the d-pawn. 'Strangely enough, even two pawns down Black would have retained drawing chances, had he played 56...♗a3! 57 ♘xf7+ ♔f6 and 58...♔e5.' (Panov) This is indeed more tenacious, although after 57 d6! ♔f6 58 d7 ♔e7 59 ♘xf7 ♔xd7 60 ♘e5+ White would also have won.

57 ♘xf7+ ♔f6 58 ♘d8! ♗b6 (58...♔e5? 59 ♘c6+) **59 ♘c6 ♗c5 60 ♔f4!**

An elegant pawn sacrifice, which forces the win. 60 ♔g3 ♗d6+ 61 f4? g5 or 60 ♔e2 ♔g5 61 f3 ♔f4 was inaccurate.

60...♗xf2 (60...g5+ 61 ♔f3, then ♔e2, f2-f3, ♔d3-c4-b5-a6-b7 etc.) **61 g5+ ♔f7 62 ♘e5+ ♔e7**

Like a move earlier, 62...♔g7 loses to 63 d6.

63 ♘xg6+ ♔d6 64 ♔e4 ♗g3 65 ♘f4 ♔e7 66 ♔e5 ♗e1 67 d6+ ♔d7 68 g6 ♗b4 69 ♔d5 (but not 69 g7? ♗c3+) **69...♔e8 70 d7+! 1-0**

By accurately exploiting his opponent's mistake, Capa reduced the deficit to 3-4. It is true that the game might have left an unpleasant aftertaste: from a practically winning position he had reached one that was drawn. In one of the match books there is an original passage on this theme (which Kotov liked to quote): 'Capablanca conducted the entire game in his best style and nevertheless he won it accidentally.' One great expert on chess commented: 'After his undeserved draw in the 27th game I thought that Capablanca might be able to save the match, but after his win in the 29th game I finally saw that things were lost for him.'

However, a careful study of the next few games shows that the opinion of the 'expert' was a long way from reality. The match initiative was still with the Cuban! In the 30th game he improved Black's play compared with the 28th and confidently gained a draw. And in the 31st he was not afraid to go in for double-edged play, allowing his opponent serious counter-chances. But it only needed Black to stumble – and Capablanca found a way to take play into an endgame where he was a pawn up with excellent winning chances.

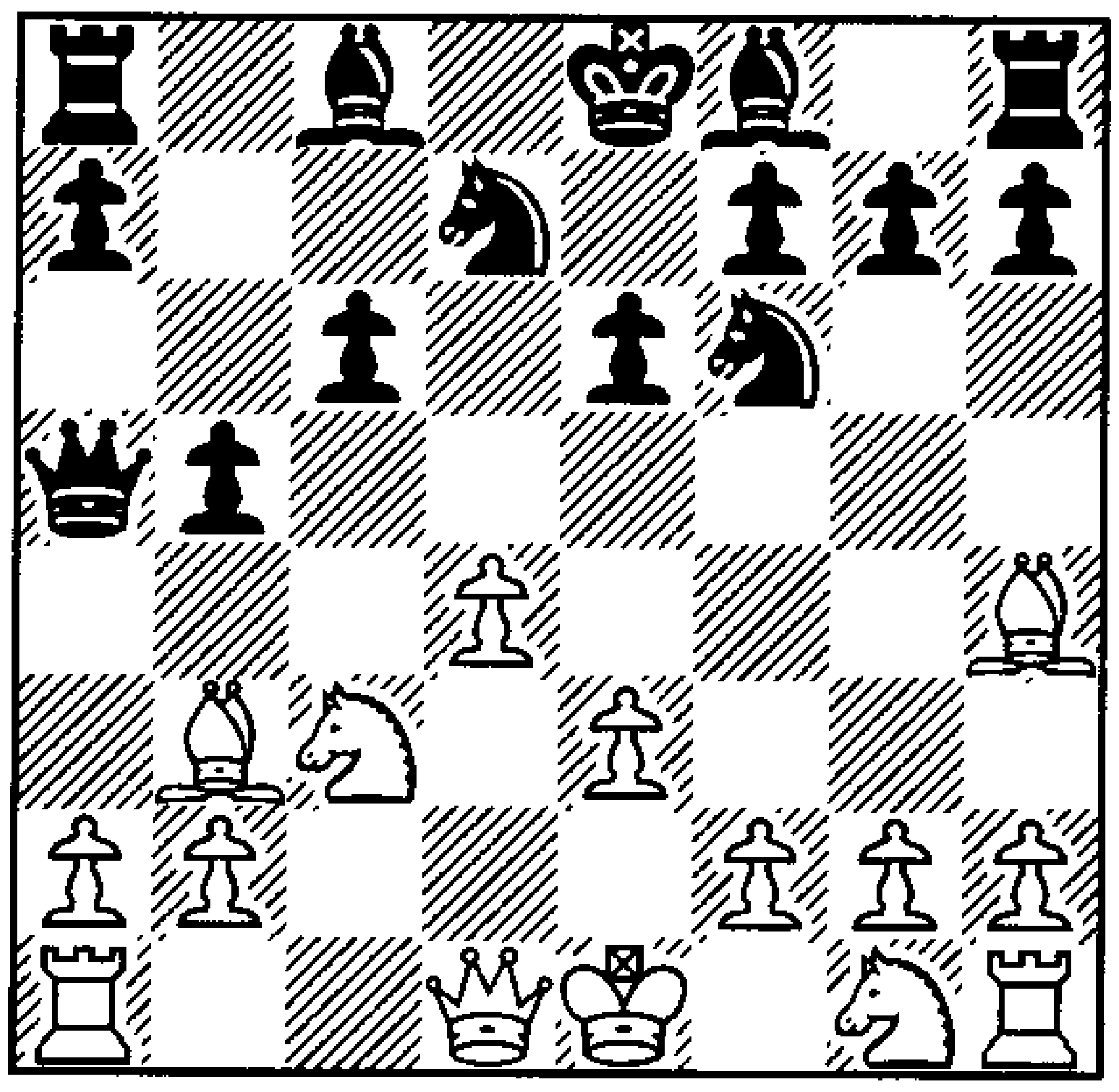
Game 107
J.R.Capablanca-A.Alekhine
World Championship Match,
Buenos Aires 1927, 31st game
Queen's Gambit D51

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♘bd7 5 e3 c6 6 ♗d3

A harmless deviation from the Cambridge Springs. In the fifth game Capa did this by 6 a3 ♗e7 7 ♘f3, and in the ninth – 6 ♕c2 ♕a5 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 e4 ♘xc3 9 ♗d2, but unsuccessfully (9...♕a4! 10 ♕xc3 a5! 11 ♘f3 ♗b4 with equality). In the 32nd game Alekhine preferred 6 cxd5 exd5 7 ♗d3, and in the 34th he reverted to 6 a3 (*Game No.130*).

6...♕a5! 7 ♗h4 dxc4 (7...♗b4 8 ♘e2!) **8 ♗xc4 b5 9 ♗b3**

In the 33rd game after 9 ♗d3 ♗b7 (but not 9...b4?! 10 ♕a4! ♕xa4 11 ♘xa4) 10 ♘ge2 a6 11 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 12 a3 ♕b6 13 ♘e4 ♘xe4 (13...c5!? Alekhine) 14 ♗xe4 c5 15 dxc5 ♗xc5 16 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 17 0-0 0-0 18 ♖c1 ♖ac8 a draw was agreed.

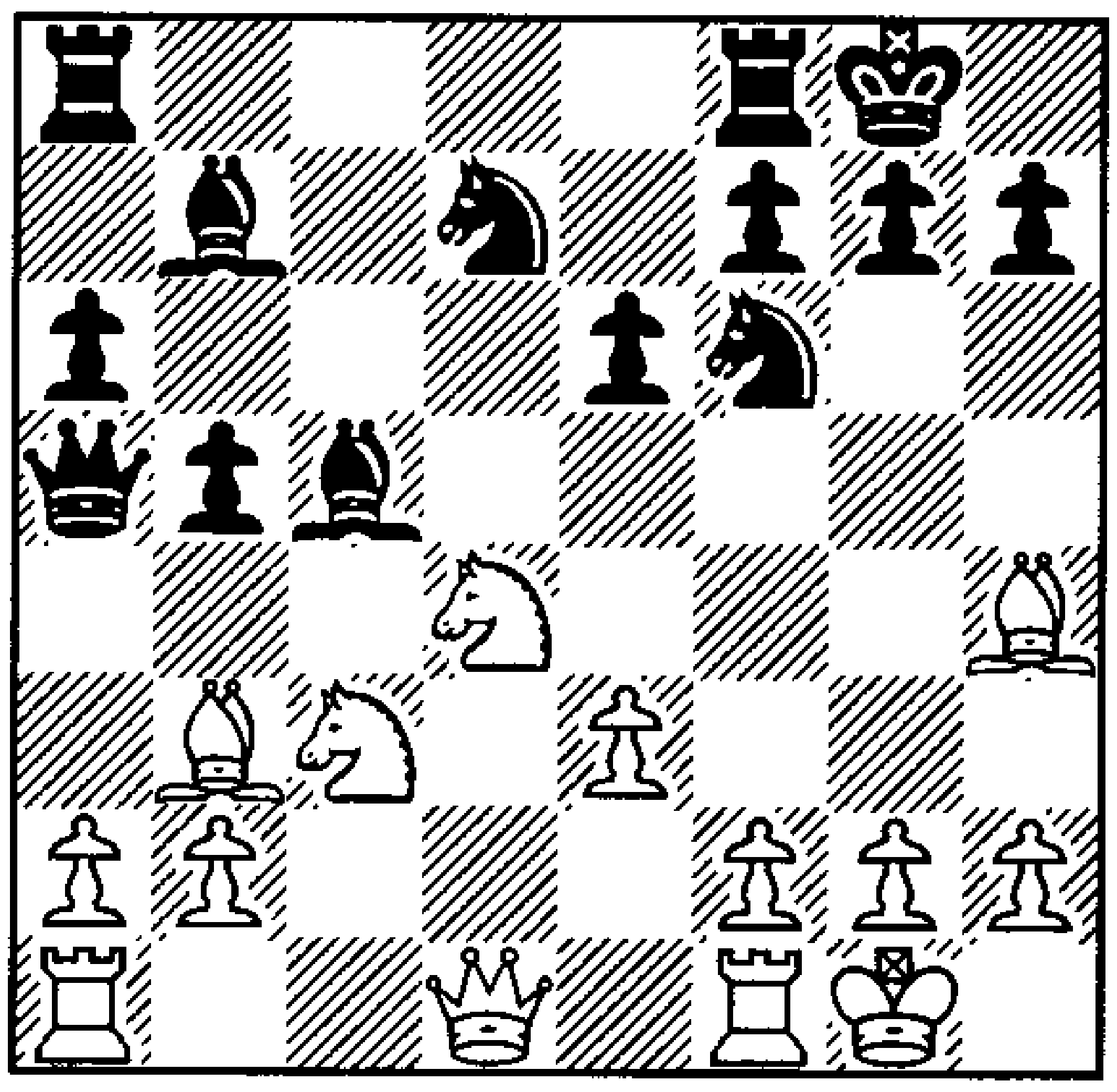


9...♗b7 10 ♘f3 (10 ♘ge2?! c5!) **10...c5 11 dxc5 ♗xc5**

Alekhine also suggested 11...♘xc5!? 12 ♗xf6 gxf6.

12 0-0 0-0 13 ♘d4 a6

'The simplest way of defending against the threat of ♘xe6 is to ignore it. Black could also maintain an equal game with 13...b4 14 ♘a4 ♗d5.' (Alekhine) 14...♗e7!? will also do – 15 ♘xe6? fxe6 16 ♗xe6+ ♔h8 17 ♗xd7 g5 18 ♗g3 ♖ad8 wins for Black.



14 ♕e2

'A somewhat risky move. I had rather expected 14 a3, by which White would have avoided both an isolated d-pawn, and the diversion of his queen's knight to the edge of the board. And 14 ♘xe6?! fxe6 15 ♗xe6+ would only expose him to unnecessary dangers:

1) 15...♖f7 16 ♕b3 ♘e5 17 ♖ad1 ♕c7 and if 18 ♗g3, then 18...♕c6 and ...♘c4 with active piece play (*however, 17 ♗xf6! gxf6 18 ♘d5 is better, and so I would prefer 16..♖af8 17 ♖ad1 ♕c7 – G. K.*);

2) 15...♔h8!? 16 ♗xd7 ♖ad8 17 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 18 ♕h5 ♕c7 19 ♗h3, and now either 19...♗d6 20 f4 ♕b6, when the sacrificed material is bound to be won back, or 19...♖h6 20 ♕e2 ♕e5 with a very strong attack for Black (*true, after 21 ♖ad1 ♖f8 things are not so clear as in the event of 20...b4! 21 ♘d1 a5 22 ♖e1 ♗a6 23 ♕c2 ♗d3 24 ♕a4 g5 – G. K.*).

'In the game I intended choosing the sharper second line.' (Alekhine)

14...b4 15 ♘a4 ♗xd4 16 exd4 ♘d5

The immediate 16...♗c6?! is dubious in view of 17 ♘c5 ♘xc5 18 dxc5 ♕xc5 19 ♗xf6 gxf6 20 ♖fc1! (but not 20 ♖ac1?! ♗b5 21

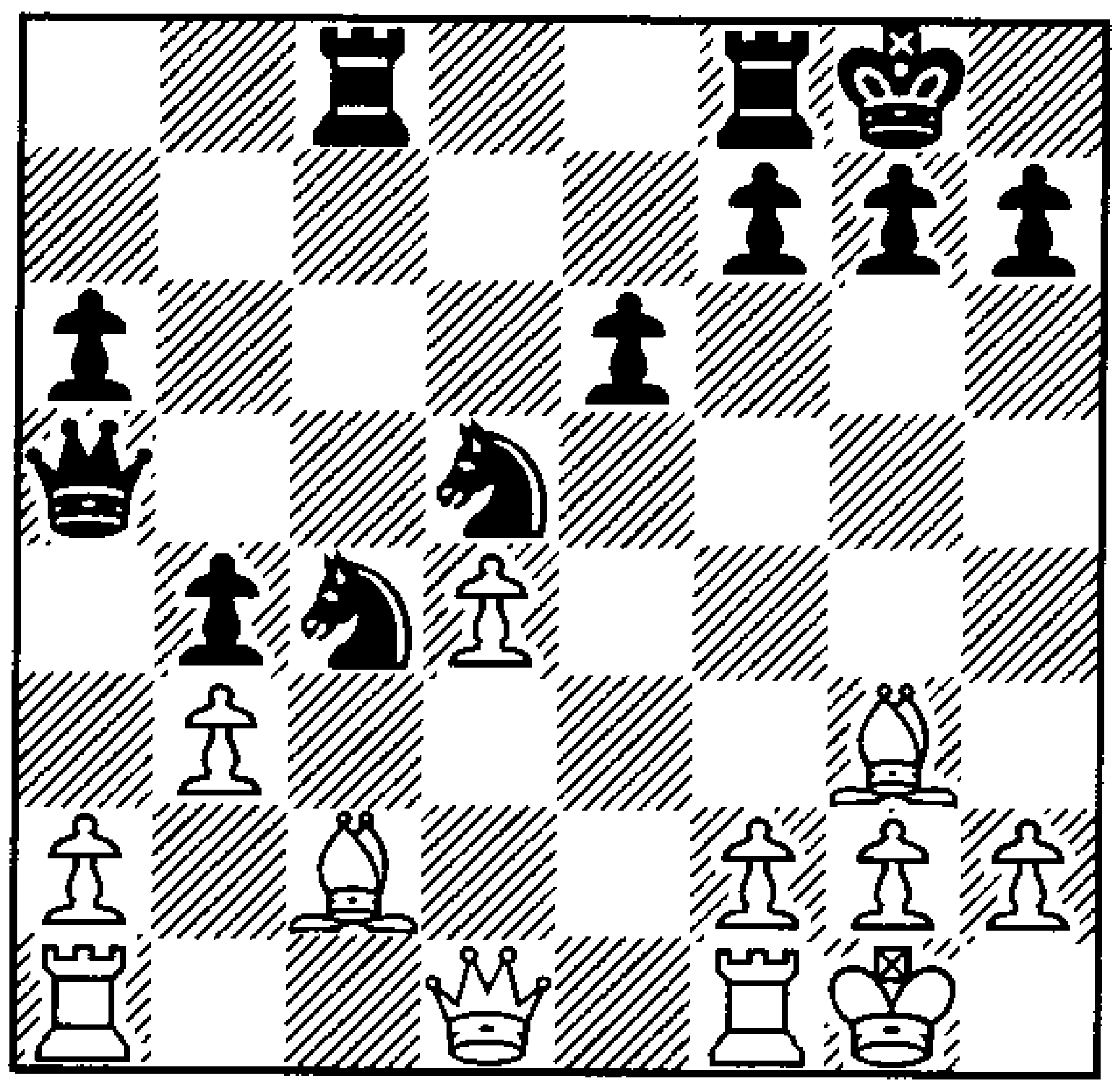
♕g4+ ♕g5).

17 ♗g3 ♗c6 18 ♕c2 ♗xa4 (18...♖ac8 19 ♘c5!) **19 ♗xa4 ♖ac8 20 ♕d1 ♘7b6 21 ♗c2**

Or 21 ♗b3 ♕b5! with the threat of ...a6-a5-a4. It is now evident that White has not played the opening very well and his bishops are by no means superior to the black knights.

21...♘c4 22 b3?!

22 ♕d3 f5 was unfavourable for White, but this new weakening could have cost Capablanca dearly.



22...♘a3?!

A rare instance of Alekhine missing a tactical blow! This shows that he too was tired... As he writes, 22...♘de3! suggests itself (but not 22...♘ce3? 23 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 24 ♕h5+ ♔g8 25 fxe3) – 23 fxe3 (or 23 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 24 ♕d3+ ♕f5!) 23...♘xe3 24 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 25 ♕d3+ ♘f5 26 ♗e5 (26 ♗e1 ♔g8) 26...♔g8! with an obvious positional advantage, for example: 27 ♕e4 (27 d5? ♖c5!) 27...♕b6 28 g4 ♘e7 29 ♖ac1 ♖c3 etc.

23 ♗d3 ♘b5 24 ♗e5!

The situation has become sharper.

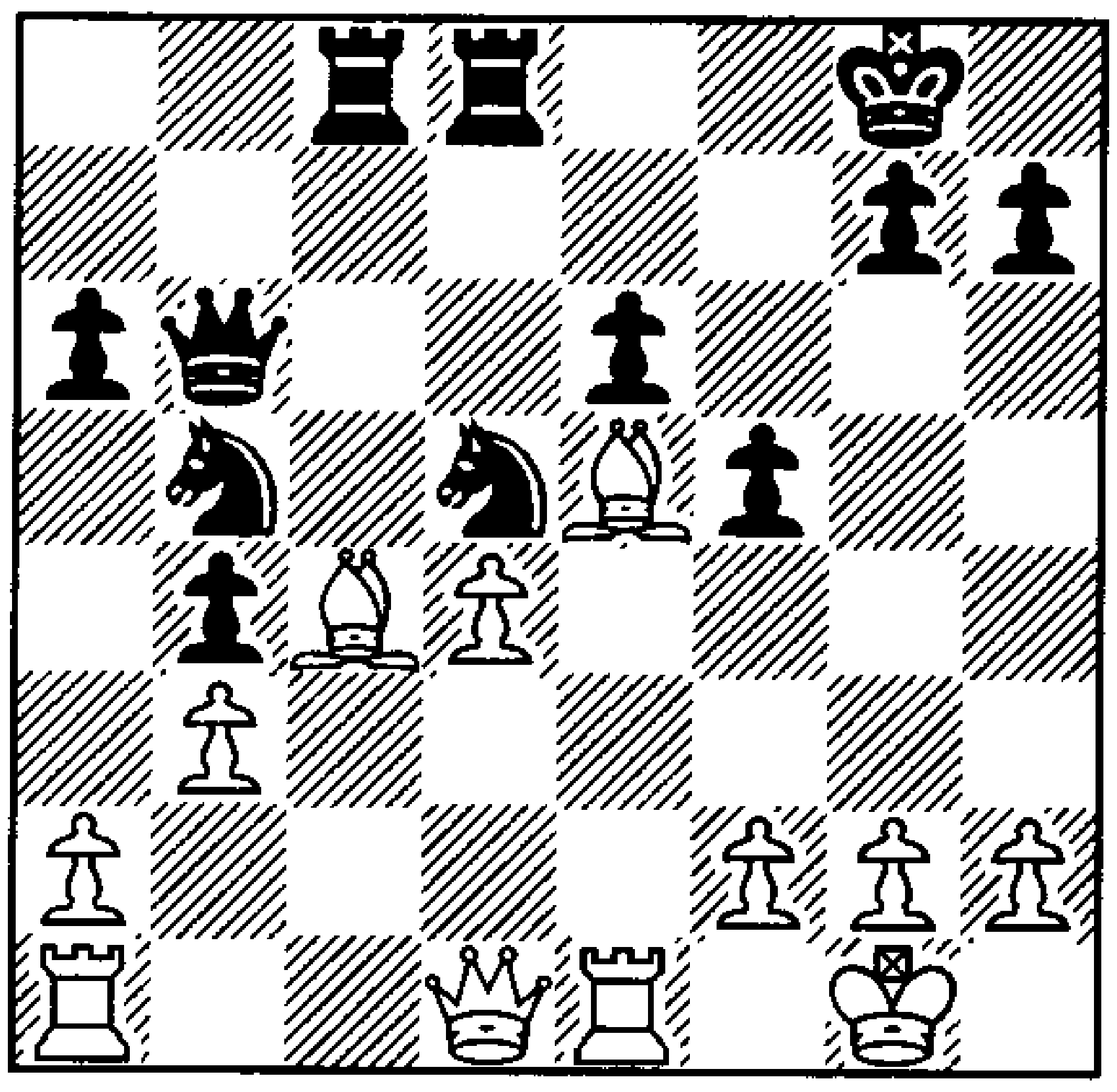
24...f5?!

Possibly sensing his opponent's nervous fatigue, the challenger decides to stake everything. The simple 24...f6! 25 ♕h5 g6 26 ♗xg6 hxg6 27 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 would have led to a draw (28 ♕h6+). 'The attempt to win with 28 f4 would fail to 28...♖c7 29 ♗xc7 ♕xc7 30 ♖f3 ♕h7! (Alekhine). And if 31 ♖h3?, then 31...♕xh3 32 gxh3 ♖g8 wins. But instead of 30 ♖f3?, 30 f5! is very strong, for example: 30...♘xd4 31 fxe6 ♘f4 32 ♕h6+ ♔g8 33 ♖ae1 ♘dxe6 34 ♖e4 with an attack. Therefore if 28 f4 Black should force a draw by 28...fxe5! – 29 ♕h6+ (29 ♖f3? ♘xf4) 29...♔g8.

25 ♗c4 ♖fd8?!

'It is only after this move that Black gets into some difficulties. By the manoeuvre 25...♕d8! and ...♕d7 he could have safeguarded both his kingside and his centre, when a difficult game, with chances for both sides, would have arisen.' (Alekhine) However, in my opinion, the position is now in White's favour all the same: his bishops are gaining in strength! The position is a favourable modification for him of the well-known game Karpov-Korchnoi (Baguio 5th matchgame 1978).

26 ♖e1 ♕b6



27 ♕d2 ♕b7?

'This pawn sacrifice seemed to me to be sufficient for a draw, but in fact it is not fully correct. 27...♘bc3 would have given Black a perfectly defensible position, since after 28 a3! ♘e4 White has no great advantage.' (Alekhine) I don't agree with this: firstly, there is a rather promising exchange sacrifice – 29 ♖xe4!? fxe4 30 axb4 ♖a8 31 ♕g5 ♖d7 32 b5 a5 33 ♕g4, and secondly, White retains an enduring plus after 29 ♕d3 a5 30 f3 ♘d6 31 ♗xd5 exd5 32 axb4 ♕xb4 33 ♖e3 or 31 axb4 ♘xc4 32 bxc4 ♘xb4 33 ♕b3.

I should add that 27...a5? would have led to the loss of a pawn: 28 ♕g5 ♖d7 29 ♗xd5 exd5 30 ♕xf5.

28 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 29 ♕xb4 ♖c2

But not 29...♘xd4? 30 ♗xd4 ♕xd4 31 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 32 ♖xe6 winning.

30 ♕e7!

White forces the exchange of queens, killing the opponent's temporary activity and beginning the conversion of his extra pawn.

30...♕d7 31 ♕xd7 ♖xd7 32 ♔f1!

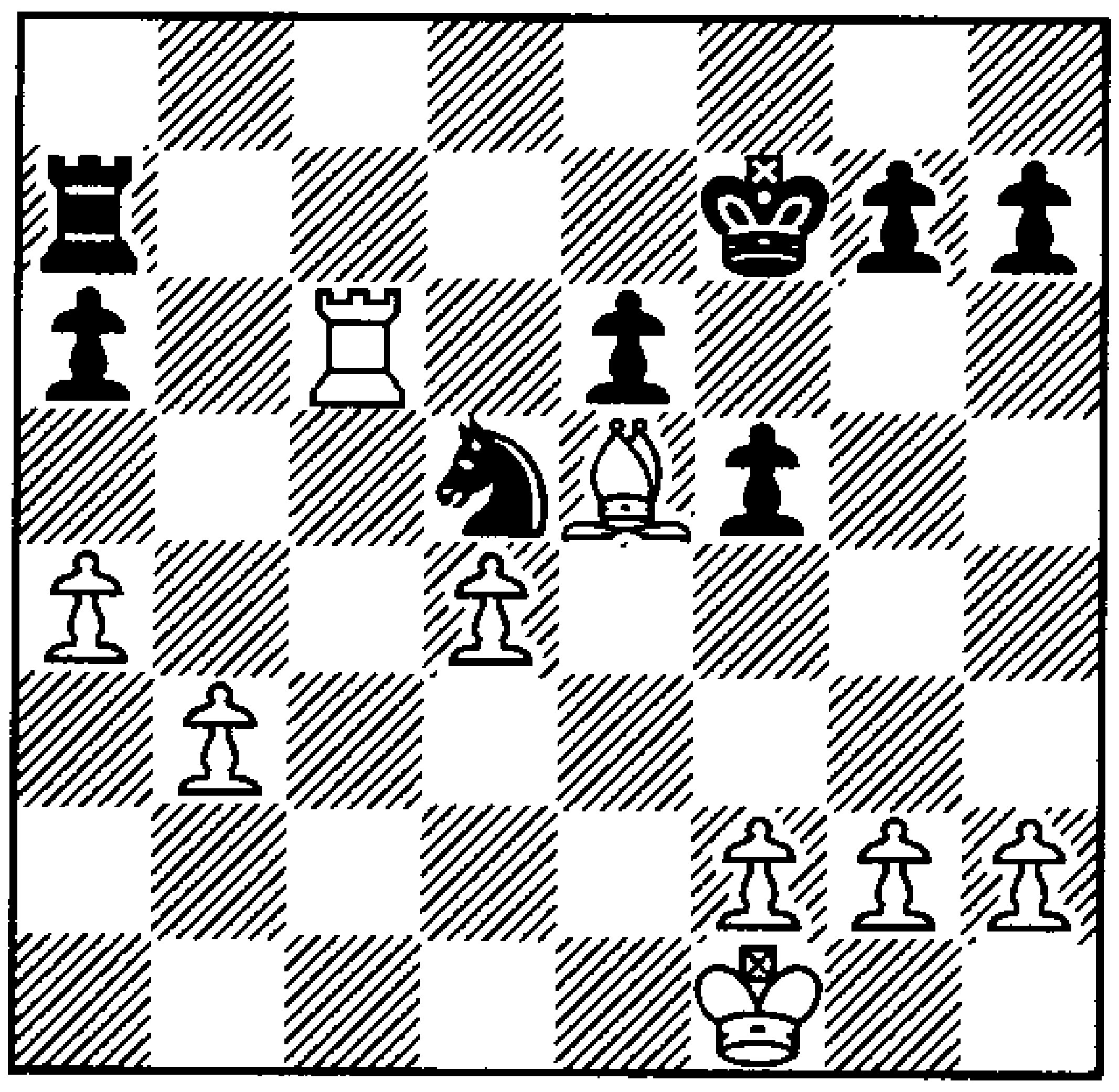
'This indirectly protects the pawn on d4 and threatens 33 ♖ec1. It would be much weaker to play 32 a4 ♘xd4 33 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 34 ♖xe6 ♖dd2 35 ♖f1 ♖b2, when White's winning chances would be virtually negligible.' (Alekhine)

32...♔f7

Black preserves the d5-square for his knight. 'Even fewer chances (*or perhaps more?! – G. K.*) were offered by 32...♖d5 33 ♖ec1!, forcing 33...♖xc1+ 34 ♖xc1 ♘xd4 35 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 36 ♖c6 a5 37 ♖a6! ♖d5 38 ♖xe6 a4 39 ♖e1 followed by ♖b1. Now 32...♘c3 was also inadequate, because of 33 ♖ac1 ♖xc1 34 ♖xc1 ♘xa2 35 ♖c6.' (Alekhine)

33 a4 ♘c3 34 ♖ac1 ♖xc1 35 ♖xc1 ♘d5 36 ♖c6 ♖a7

Of course, 36...♖b7? 37 ♖xa6 ♖xb3 38 ♖a7+ was hopeless for Black.



Black has a strong knight, but White has a no less strong, dominant bishop, as well as an active rook and a sound extra pawn on the wing – a potential outside passed pawn. He only needs to take care that the black rook does not leap, like a jack-in-the-box, to b7 and then to b3. In short, White has a technically won endgame and it is probable that Capablanca had mentally chalked up the win already: he usually won such positions without thinking.

37 a5!?

Alekhine attaches a question mark to this move and recommends 37 h4, 'to disable the opposing kingside and then, with the necessary precautions, to bring the king to the queenside. This plan would have reduced Black's drawing chances to the minimum.'

The verdict of Levenfish and Romanovsky is no less severe: 'The pawn stood better at a4 than at a5, since now Black gains control of the b5-square, which is the key to the position. Correct was 37 ♔e2 g5 38 h3 h5 39 ♖c8 ♖b7 40 ♖b8 ♖xb8 41 ♗xb8 ♔e7 42 ♔d3 ♔d7 43 ♔c4 ♔c6 44 b4! ♘b6+ 45 ♔b3 ♔d5 46 b5 axb5 47 a5! ♘d7 48 ♗e5 winning.'

However, in 1994(!) the Russian master Fridstein accomplished a complete revolution in the evaluation of this ending, beginning with a criticism of this last variation: 'The analysis was terminated too early: after 48...♘xe5! 49 dxe5 ♔c5 the pawn ending is drawn! However, instead of 48 ♗e5? White wins by 48 ♗c7! In turn, Black should not play 45...♔d5?! – after 45...g4 it is not at all easy to show that White has a win. But the main thing is that White has no reason to exchange his active rook for the opponent's passive rook! Instead of 39 ♖c8?! it is not too late to transpose into a position from the game by 39 a5! The point is that the 'key to the position' is not the b5-square, but the b6-square!'

Perhaps 37 h4 was indeed simpler, since it would have deprived Black of any counterplay. However, the move in the game was not at all bad, as we shall see.

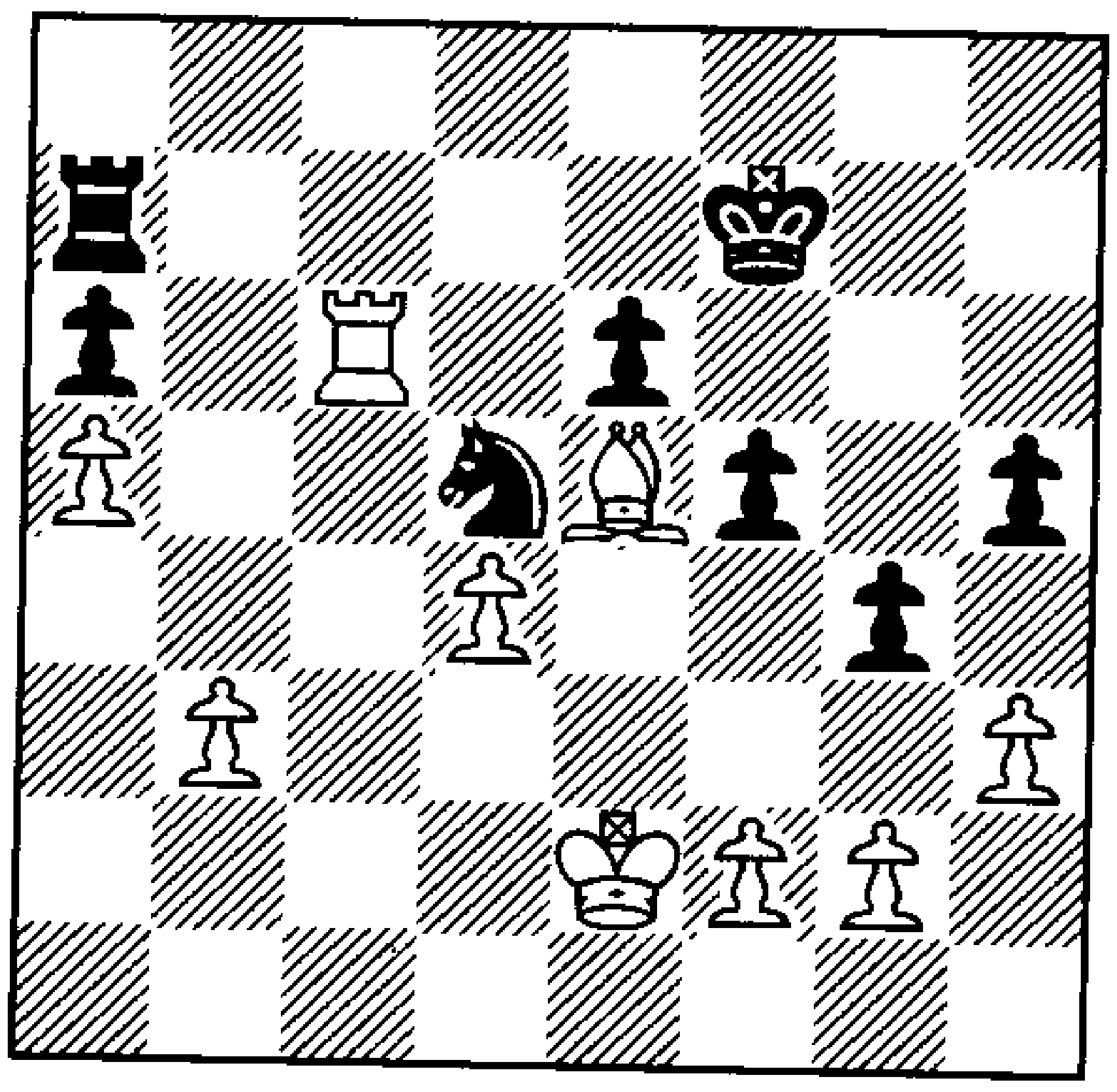
37...g5! (Alekhine's exclamation mark) **38 h3**

It is not clear whether 38 ♔e2 was any better.

38...h5 39 ♔e2 g4?

As it transpired many years later, this decisively weakens the f4-square. 'But what should Black play? If he waits, White will play his king to a3 and advance his b-pawn. This means that the most tenacious is 39...♖b7 40 ♖xa6 ♖xb3, initiating at least some kind of fight: 41 ♖a7+ ♔g6 42 a6 (here too 37.a5! came in useful!) 42...♖a3 (42...♖b2+ 43 ♔d3 ♖xf2? 44 ♖a8! wins) 43 ♖g7+ ♔h6 44 a7 ♘f4+ (or 44...♘c3+ 45 ♔d2 ♘b5 46 ♖b7 ♘xa7 47 ♖b6) 45 ♔d2 ♘xg2 46 ♖e7 ♘f4 47 ♗xf4! gxf4 48 ♖xe6+ ♔g5 49 ♖e7 ♔f6 50 ♖b7 ♔e6 51 ♔c2 ♔d5 52 ♔b2 ♖a6 53 ♔b3 and White wins.' (Fridstein)

I think that this was the culminating point of the entire match.



40 ♖c8??

The fatal last move before the time control... 'A genuine tragedy for Capablanca! 40 ♖b6!! would have given a straightforward win. Now 40...♘xb6 41 axb6 ♖b7 loses by force: 42 ♗c7 ♔e7 43 ♔e3! ♔d7 44 ♔f4 ♖xc7 45 bxc7 ♔xc7 46 ♔e5 ♔d7 47 h4 ♔e7 (or 47...a5 48 d5 exd5 49 ♔xd5) 48 f4 g3 49 d5. No better is 40...gxh3 (40...♖a8 41 h4; 40...♔e7 41 ♖b8) 41 gxh3 ♖a8 *(or 41...♘xb6 42 axb6 ♖b7 43 ♗c7 ♔e8 44 ♔f3 ♔e7 45 ♔f4 ♔f6 46 ♗d8+ ♔g6 47 ♔e5 ♔f7 48 ♔d6! – G. K.)* 42 h4 ♖c8 43 ♔d2 ♖c3 44 ♖xa6 ♖xb3 45 ♖a7+ ♔g6 46 a6 ♖a3 47 ♖g7+ ♔h6 48 a7.' (Fridstein)

Instead of this Capa unexpectedly removes the attack on the a6-pawn and releases the black rook.

40...♖b7! 41 ♖b8

This essentially terminates the game. 'After the time wasted on his previous move, White could no longer have prevented Black from getting enough counterplay for a draw, for example: 41 hxg4 hxg4 42 ♖a8 ♖xb3 43 ♖a7+ ♔g6 44 ♖xa6 f4! 45 ♖xe6+ ♔f5 46 ♖e8 *(46 ♖d6 ♔e4 – G. K.)*, and now 46...♖a3, or indeed 46...♖b2+ or 46...f3+.' (Alekhine) I would prefer 46...♖a3 (46...♖b2+?! 47 ♔d3 ♖xf2 48 ♗d6 ♔g6 49 ♖e6+ ♔f7 50 ♖e2 ♖f1 51 ♖e5) 47 ♗d6 f3+ 48 gxf3 gxf3+ 49 ♔d2 ♖xa5 50 ♔d3 ♘f6 51 ♖f8 (or 51 ♖e3 ♔g4 52 ♗e7 ♘d5 53 ♖e4+ ♔h3 54 ♖e5 ♔g2) 51...♔e6 52 ♗c5 ♘g4 53 ♖xf3 ♖a2 54 ♔c4 ♖c2+ 55 ♔b3 ♖d2 56 ♔c3 ♖a2 drawing.

Here the game was adjourned and Black sealed

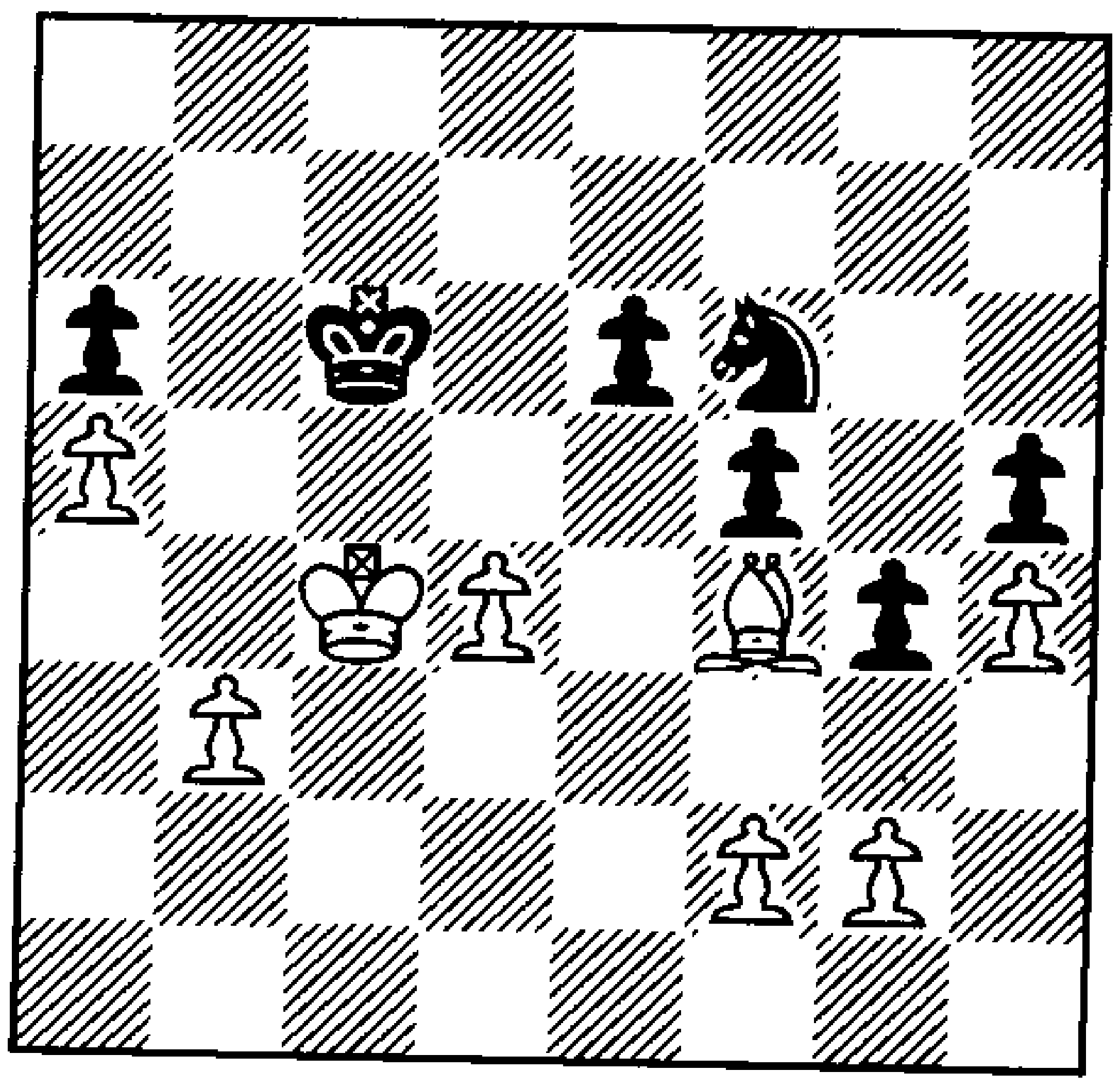
41...♖xb8

On the resumption there followed

42 ♗xb8

and... on White's proposal a draw was agreed. 'Of course, Black immediately plays 42...♔e7 43 ♔d3 (43 f3 gxh3 44 gxh3 h4!) 43...♔d7 44 ♔c4 ♔c6.' (Alekhine)

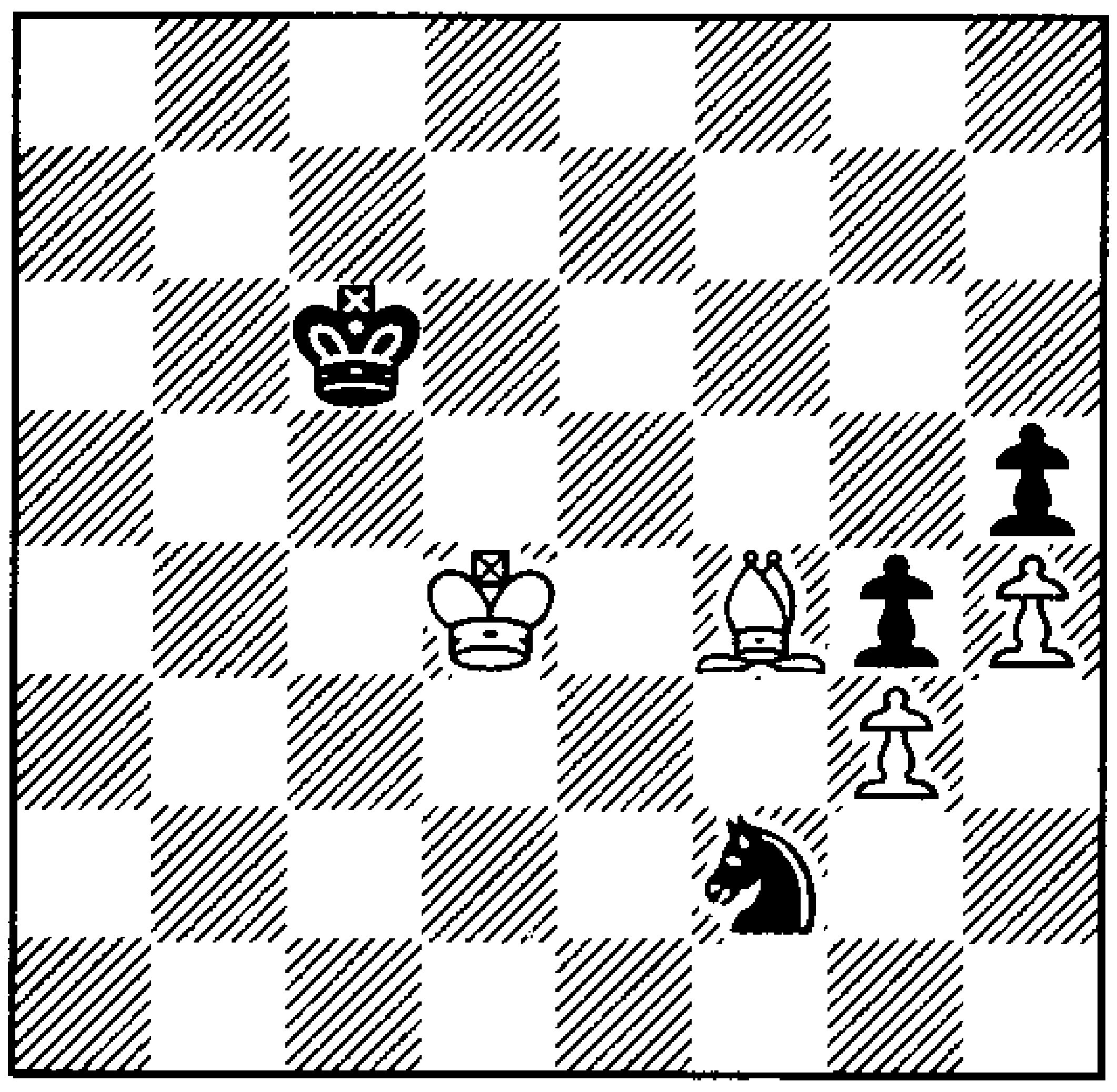
However, as was discovered at the end of the 20th century by the Russian master Goldin, even in this seemingly arid desert White would have retained real winning chances after 45 h4! ♘f6 46 ♗f4.



Analysis diagram

After fixing the h5-pawn, White wants to break through to it with his king with the help of d4-d5. The main line goes 46...♘e4 (inferior is 46...♘d5?! 47 g3 ♘f6 48 d5+! ♘xd5 49 ♔d4 ♘xf4 50 gxf4 ♔d6 51 b4 winning) 47 b4 (it is too early for 47 d5+?! exd5+ 48 ♔d4 ♘c5!) 47...♘f6! (47...♘xf2?! 48 d5+! exd5+ 49 ♔d4 ♘e4 50 ♔e5 wins) 48 ♗h6 ♘d5 49 g3 ♘f6 50 ♗e3! (Fridstein; 50 ♗g5?! ♘e4! draws, as does 50 d5+?! ♘xd5 51 ♔d4 ♘xb4 52 ♔e5 ♔d7 53 ♔f6 ♘c6! Lilienthal) 50...♘d5 51 ♗d2! ♘f6 52 d5+! At last! Black has two replies:

1) 52...exd5+ 53 ♔d4 ♘e4 54 ♗e3! ♔d6 55 b5 axb5 56 a6 ♔c6 57 a7 ♔b7 58 ♔xd5 b4 59 ♔c4 f4 60 ♗xf4 ♔xa7 61 ♔xb4 ♔b6 62 ♔c4 ♔c6 63 ♔d4 ♘xf2



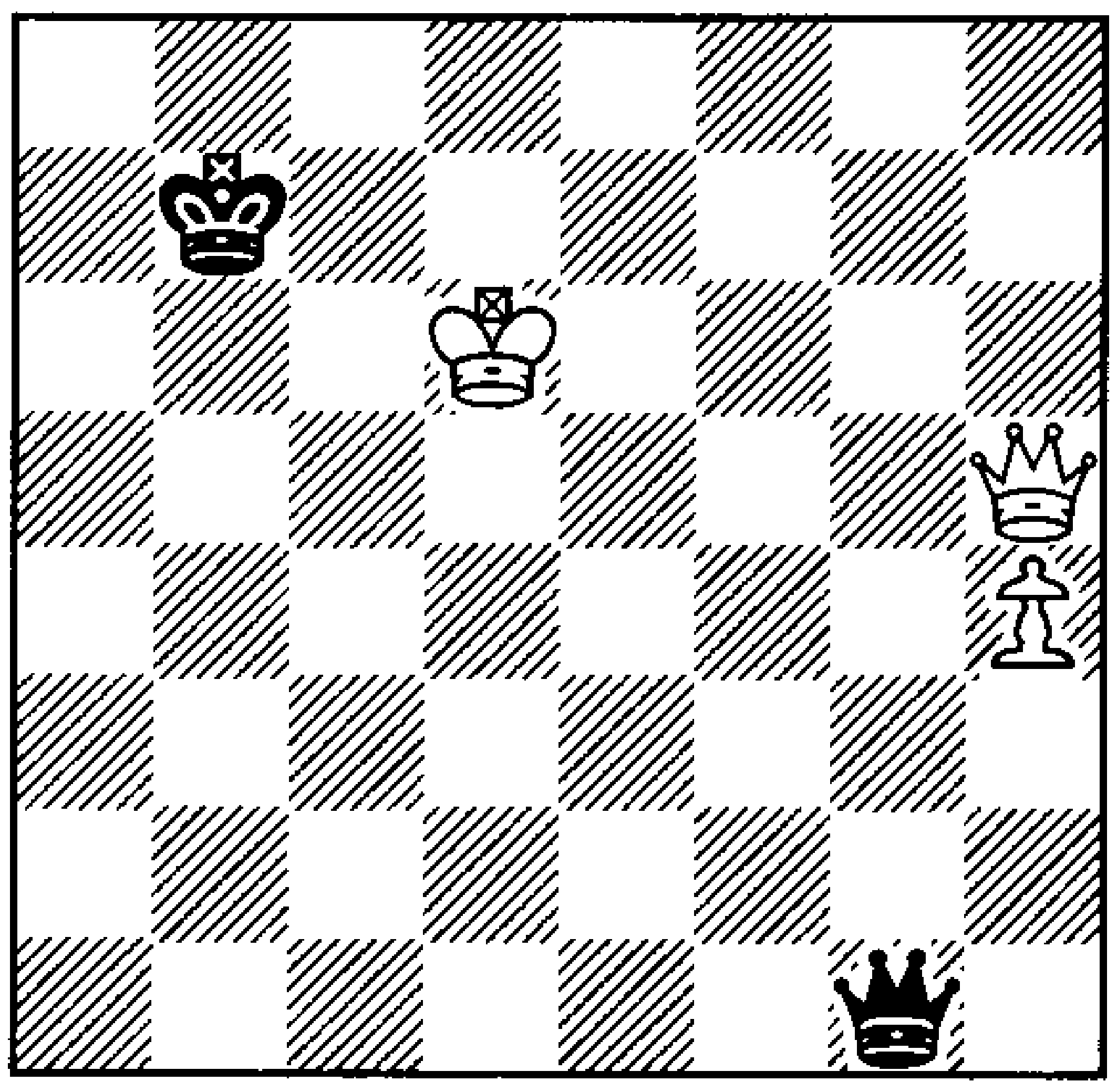
Analysis diagram

Lilienthal thought that this was a draw: 64 ♔e5?! ♘d3+ 65 ♔f5 ♘xf4 66 ♔xf4 ♔d5 67 ♔g5 ♔e4; 64 ♔e3?! ♘h3! 65 ♗b8 ♔d5 66 ♗a7 ♘g1. But Goldin demonstrated a win for White, based on zugzwang: 64 ♗b8! ♔b7 65 ♗e5 ♔c6 66 ♗f4 ♔d7 67 ♔e5 ♔e7 68 ♔f5 ♔f7 69 ♔g5 (*? – G.K.*) 69...♔e6 (*? – G.K.*) 70 ♔xh5 ♔f5 71 ♔h6 ♘e4 (or 71...♔f6 72 ♗g5+ ♔f5 73 ♔g7 ♘e4 74 ♗f4) 72 ♔g7 ♘f6 73 ♗b8! ♘e8+ 74 ♔h6 and 75 h5 (*64* 1999, No.8). Although the Russian master missed 69...♘h3+! and ...♘xf4 with an immediate draw, in general he evaluated the position correctly: instead of 69 ♔g5? White wins by 69 ♗b8! (the same key move) 69...♘h3 70 ♗a7 ♔g7 71 ♗e3 ♔f7 72 ♗d4 ♔e7 73 ♔g6 ♔e6 74 ♔xh5;

2) 52...♘xd5 53 ♔d4 ♔d6 54 ♗f4+! ♔d7! (inferior is 54...♔c6 55 ♔e5 ♔d7 56 ♗d2 ♔e7 57 b5 axb5 58 a6 ♘b6 59 a7 ♘a8 60 ♗b4+ ♔d7 61 ♔f6, or 54...♘xf4 55 gxf4 ♔d7 56 ♔e5 ♔e7 57 b5) 55 ♔c5! ♘xf4! (55...♘c3?! 56 ♗e5 ♘e4+ 57 ♔b6 ♘xf2 58 b5) 56 gxf4 ♔c7 57 b5 axb5 58 a6 b4 59 ♔xb4 ♔b6 60 ♔c4! (Lilienthal's discovery; 60 a7?! ♔xa7 61 ♔c5 e5! 62 fxe5 f4 draws) 60...♔xa6 and now:

a) 61 ♔d4 ♔b5 62 ♔e5 ♔c4 63 ♔xe6 ♔d3 64 ♔xf5 ♔e2 65 ♔e4! ♔xf2 66 f5 g3 67 f6 g2 68 f7 g1♕ 69 f8♕+ ♔e2! (but not 69...♔e1? 70 ♕b4+) 70 ♕f3+ ♔d2 71 ♕xh5 (or 71 ♕d3+ ♔c1 72 ♕e3+ ♕xe3+ 73 ♔xe3 ♔c2) 71...♕e3+ 72 ♔f5 ♕c5+ 73 ♔g6 ♕d6+ 74 ♔f7 ♕d7+ 75 ♔f6 ♕d6+ with a draw;

b) 61 ♔c5! e5 62 fxe5 ♔b7! (62...f4? 63 e6) 63 ♔d6 f4 64 e6 g3 65 fxg3 fxg3 66 e7 g2 67 e8♕ g1♕ 68 ♕xh5



Analysis diagram

This queen ending looks more promising than the one reached in variation a): thanks to the position of the black king at b7, White hopes to defend against the checks and queen his h-pawn (*Shakhmaty v Rossii* 1998, Nos.5-6).

The database analytical module quickly establishes that if it is White to move he does indeed win, although with Black to move the position is after all a draw: 68...♕g3+ 69 ♔e6

♕e3+ 70 ♔f6 ♕f4+ 71 ♔g7 ♕d4+! (but not 71...♕g3+? 72 ♕g5 and... mate in another 81 moves!) 72 ♔h7 ♕e4+ 73 ♔h6 ♔c8 74 ♕g5 (or 74 ♕c5+ ♔d7 75 h5 ♕f4+ 76 ♔g7 ♕g4+ 77 ♔h8 ♕f4 78 ♕a7+ ♔e8 79 ♕g7 ♕f8+ 80 ♕g8 ♔e7 81 ♔h7 ♕f5+ 82 ♕g6 ♕f7+ 83 ♕g7 ♔e8 84 h6 ♕f5+) 74...♕c6+ 75 ♕g6 ♕c1+ 76 ♔h7 ♕c7+ 77 ♔h8 ♕c3+ 78 ♕g7 ♕h3 79 ♕e7 ♕c3+ 80 ♔g8 ♕b3+ 81 ♔g7 ♕g3+ 82 ♕g5 ♕c7+ 83 ♔f8 ♕d6+ 84 ♔f7 ♕c7+ with endless checks.

This historic ending drew the interest of some well-known analysts: Hübner (*Schach* 1998, No.8) and Timman (*New in Chess* 1999, No.7), who discovered a less thorny path to the draw: 42...♔e7 (but not 42...gxh3? 43 gxh3 ♔e7 44 ♔f3! winning) 43 ♔d3 ♔d7 44 ♔c4 and now, instead of Alekhine's 44...♔c6 – 44...gxh3! 45 gxh3 ♔c6 (whereas without the a-pawns White wins, as Karpov showed in a similar ending against Andersson, Skelleftea 1989). Hübner recommended 43 h4!? ♔d7 44 ♔d3 (in order after 44...♔c6 45 ♔c4 to transpose into the 'main' variation), but Timman parried this by 44...♘b4+! 45 ♔c4 ♘c6 drawing (the black king has deprived the bishop of the c7-square).

In any case, nowadays such a position would have been played on until the last chance! Why then was Capa in a hurry to offer a draw, if he could have calmly analysed the endgame during the adjournment? Especially since, in view of his birthday (on 19th November the Cuban reached the age of 39) he had been granted an extra free day. Perhaps, being extremely tired and not seeing a winning plan, he decided not to waste his time and energy? Or had he noticed 40 ♖b6 and, realising that he had missed a clear win, was terribly upset and could no longer bear the thought of resuming the game?!

Timman is probably correct, when he writes that Capablanca, in reconciling himself to a draw, had already resigned the match in the depths of his heart...

Strangely enough, the importance of this truly decisive game was underestimated for several decades (everything was eclipsed by the champion's 'fatal' blunder in the 27th game). Probably because it was poorly analysed. Although it was the outcome of this game that changed chess history: had Capablanca won, the match score would have become 4-4, and since the Cuban only needed five wins to retain his title, he could well have remained champion, and it would have been very hard for Alekhine to obtain a second match. But after missing a win, Capablanca was depressed and finally broken: he lost the 32nd and 34th games, and with them the match.

On the whole, the reasons for the champion's failure are clear: excessive self-confidence and, as a consequence, weak preparation, a habitual inclination to try and win with little expenditure of effort, without tension and the calculation of 'dangerous' variations, hence the tactical errors, and then, after encountering an incredibly resourceful opponent and a number of heavy defeats – shock, despair, loss of belief in himself... Even after pulling himself together, the Cuban was no longer able to change the course of the match. Here is what grandmaster Averbakh wrote about this:

'It is impossible to ignore a highly important factor of the chess struggle – psychology. We wonder: why was Capablanca, at that time undoubtedly the best "technician" in the world, unable to win technically won positions in the 27th and 31st games? On one occasion Alekhine, during the period when he temporarily lost the world crown, explained his avoidance of the transition into a technical endgame by the fact that "I simply could not rely on my patience and nerves – which certainly would have been required for winning the endgame in question." There you have it: technique is first and foremost nerves! And towards the end of the exhausting two-month marathon Capa's were clearly not in good shape. It was for this reason that he was unable to win positions that in other conditions he would have easily converted into a win.'

I think nevertheless that Alekhine did not really like the character of the play between the 27th and 31st games (to say nothing of from the third to the seventh). He once again realised how mighty his opponent was, and so he was by no means eager for a return match, to which, according to the London agreement, the ex-champion had the right. Unfortunately, Capablanca did not immediately agree to play under the same conditions, but delayed his challenge and allowed Alekhine a formally legitimate opportunity to avoid a return match (the details of these dramas are given in the chapter on the fourth champion).

One can only guess how a second match between them would have gone. Capablanca, having learned from bitter experience, could have prepared properly for it. For the first time he would have had to give his all, from beginning to end! Given the Cuban's colossal natural talent and the fact that he was still comparatively young (40 years old), the chess world had a chance of seeing him at the peak of his game.

An analysis of the match shows that in a second match too there would have been a very hard, roughly equal battle. If one takes the purely chess aspect, I would nevertheless have put my money on Capablanca (as also in the first match, had he approached it more seriously). But in matches of such calibre the human character also tells. Before Buenos Aires, Capa had never in his life had to exert himself strongly. Even in the match with Lasker he played at half-intensity, and this was sufficient. Whereas against Alekhine – no! And there is still the question of how long the Cuban would have withstood the unusually high tension...

Capablanca was the first to experience the burden of an unlimited match and he severely criticised it: 'Without a limit to the number of games,' he wrote early in 1928 to the FIDE President Alexander Rueb, 'it is quite possible that the match may never be finished, or that it may last so long as to make the result merely dependent on the physical and mental endurance of the players. In other words it would depend on who would be exhausted first, and not on who was the better player. This does not take into consideration the cost of the match, which evidently is greater the longer it lasts.' Therefore Capablanca suggested restricting the number of games to 16 – i.e., if by that time neither of the players had achieved six wins, the winner of the match and the world champion would be simply the one who was leading (with the scores equal the champion would retain his title).

He sent a copy of this letter to Alekhine, but in reply the latter declared: 'I won six games from you in fair play and I shall only recognise the superiority of one (be it you or another) who will also win six games from me.' Nevertheless, Alekhine did later play matches that were limited to 30 games...

FIDE also did not support Capablanca. On the contrary, it put forward a different, 'official' challenger – the FIDE champion Bogoljubow. (On the other hand, in the mid-70s FIDE supported Fischer, and then also Karpov, who dragged out of the archival dust the long-forgotten unlimited matches. In 1986 they were buried again – and this time, it would seem, for ever.)

In the Autumn of his Career

The former champion spent the decade after his failure in Buenos Aires in the desperate hope of playing another match for the crown. His first tournament appearance was Bad Kissingen 1928: 1. Bogoljubow – 8 out of 11; 2. Capablanca – 7; 3-4. Rubinstein and Euwe – 6½; 5. Nimzowitsch – 6; 6. Réti – 5½ etc. Capa's 'regular' win against Bogoljubow was, alas, cancelled out by a defeat against Spielmann. Immediately after the tournament Bogoljubow challenged Alekhine to a match, and the latter accepted...

Two months later the Cuban gave himself

an excellent present on his 40th birthday, winning the double-round Berlin 1928 in good style: 1. Capablanca – 8½ out of 12; 2. Nimzowitsch – 7; 3. Spielmann – 6½; 4. Tartakower – 5½; 5-6. Réti and Rubinstein – 5 etc.

He was far less gladdened by the grandiose Carlsbad 1929: 1. Nimzowitsch – 15 out of 21; 2-3. Capablanca and Spielmann – 14½; 4. Rubinstein – 13½; 5-7. Becker, Vidmar and Euwe – 12; 8. Bogoljubow – 11½ etc. Two defeats with Black, against Sämisch and again against Spielmann, deprived the former champion of first place, and the only consolation was the failure of his rival Bogoljubow.

Incidentally, in the Sämisch-Capablanca game an unusual curiosity occurred: **1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 a3** (Sämisch's patent!) **4...♗xc3+ 5 bxc3 d6 6 f3 e5 7 e4 ♘c6 8 ♗e3 b6 9 ♗d3 ♗a6??** (an 'automatic' move) **10 ♕a4 ♗b7 11 d5** and Black lost his knight. The secret of this 'blunder of the year' was revealed by the victim himself. It turns out that before Capa's ninth move a beautiful brunette appeared in the hall – his wife Gloria, who had turned up out of the blue from Havana. This 'opening surprise' shocked the master: he was having an affair with a beautiful blonde... (Later his first marriage, which had produced a son and a daughter, broke up, and Capa remarried.)

After this, as he had also done before, the ex-champion won several less important tournaments, but in Hastings 1930/31, after losing unexpectedly to Sultan Khan, he finished half a point behind Euwe. Then he decided to play a match of 10 games with the Dutchman, who was now one of the world elite, and he gained a convincing 6-4 victory (+2 =8). 'The Cuban was able to demonstrate his superiority over Euwe more effectively than did Alekhine and Bogoljubow,' wrote the magazine *Shakhmaty v SSSR*. 'Therefore the sooner that the long-awaited Alekhine-Capablanca return match takes place, the more that chess will gain from this. For the present champion, Capablanca, despite all his "fractures", is still the most dangerous opponent.'

Alas, the world economic crisis buried hopes of a return match. Correspondence with Alekhine led to a complete severing of relations between the historic opponents – they even stopped playing in the same tournaments...

'Capablanca used to talk calmly and moderately about everything,' recalls Alexander Koblenz. 'However, when our conversation turned to the problems of the battle for the world championship, in front of me was a quite different person: an enraged lion, although with the fervour typical only of a southerner, with his temperamental patter, which made it hard to follow the torrent of his indignant exclamations and words. This was obviously a very sore point with the Cuban... His soul was still tormented by thoughts of the loss of the crown. He spoke with incredible ardour. The defeat had inflamed his ambition! Capablanca was convinced that Alekhine was inferior to him both in strength, and in talent; a superiority complex had taken root in him, preventing him from soberly and objectively evaluating the deserved and splendid victory of his opponent. He was indignant at the inertness of the chess world in organising his return match with Alekhine. He spoke scornfully about FIDE and at the same time about "this entire chess community"... As regards Alekhine's two matches with Bogoljubow, a player who the Cuban, in his own words, always went at it hammer and tongs, Capablanca considered them to be an obscene farce.'

After the match with Euwe, Capablanca disappeared from Europe for nearly four years, restricting himself to record-breaking simultaneous displays in USA, Cuba and Mexico. His debut after the break in Hastings 1934/35 brought him a crushing defeat against Lilienthal and general disappointment: 1-3. Thomas, Flohr and Euwe – 6½ out of 9; 4. Capablanca – 5½; 5-6. Botvinnik and Lilienthal – 5 etc. In Moscow 1935 Capa was again fourth, this time with two defeats (against Lasker and Ryumin), behind Botvinnik, Flohr and his 'eternal' opponent Lasker. In Margate 1935 he finished half a point behind the young Reshevsky, losing to him in their individual game...

It appeared that the star of the Cuban genius was about to set. But here – miraculously! – in late 1935 Alekhine lost the chess crown to Euwe. Unexpectedly there was a chance for Capablanca to regain the throne! I think that this factor and his young wife, the Russian émigré Olga Chegodaev (whom I had the pleasure of meeting half a century later), inspired Capa with new strength, and in 1936 he played brilliantly in Moscow: 1. Capablanca – 13 out of 18; 2. Botvinnik – 12; 3. Flohr – 9½; 4. Lilienthal – 9; 5. Ragozin – 8½; 6. Lasker – 8 etc. And then in the 'tournament of champions' in Nottingham: 1-2. Botvinnik and Capablanca – 10 out of 14; 3-5. Reshevsky, Fine and Euwe – 9½; 6. Alekhine – 9; 7-8. Lasker and Flohr – 8½; 9. Vidmar – 6; 10-11. Bogoljubow and Tartakower – 5½ etc.

The young Smyslov, who in those years visited the Moscow international tournaments, later recalled: 'I was especially attracted by the play of Lasker and Capablanca, whose names, even in their lifetimes, were legendary. Capablanca's play was notable for its unique intuition and for its easy and spontaneous manner.'

Let's examine two examples of Capa's later play, two specimens of his famous technique. First, a lesson on his favourite theme 'bishop out of play'. After defeating Botvinnik the previous day in a sharp battle, the Cuban had become the sole leader and he arrived for his game with Lilienthal in excellent spirits. It was time to repay a little debt!

Game 108
J.R.Capablanca-A.Lilienthal
Moscow 1936, 8th round
Réti Opening A12

1 ♘f3 d5 2 c4 c6 3 b3

In the footsteps of Réti! Thus, with the help of the champions, hypermodern ideas became classical...

3...♗f5 4 ♗b2 e6 5 g3 ♘f6 6 ♗g2 ♘bd7 7 0-0 h6

'This move, preserving the f5-bishop from exchange, is completely unnecessary.' (Capablanca) In the source game Lasker played 7...♗d6 (*Game No.71*), but 7...♗e7 8 d3 0-0 9 ♘bd2 a5!? is also good, with the idea of 10 ♘h4 ♗g4 11 h3 ♗h5 12 g4 ♗g6 13 ♘xg6 hxg6 equalising.

8 d3 ♗e7

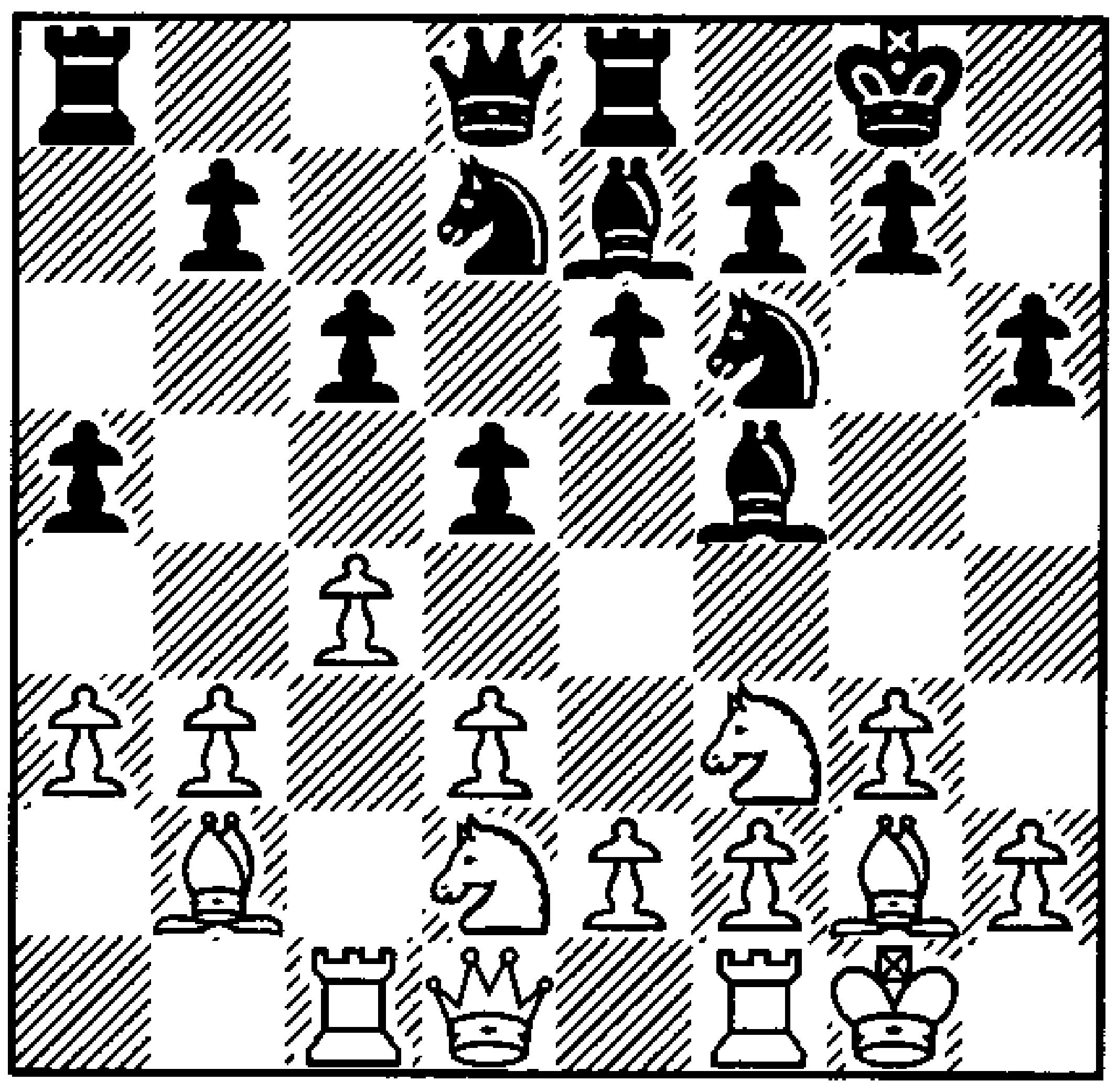
8...♗c5 is also possible, for example: 9 ♘bd2 0-0 10 ♕c2 ♕e7 11 e4 dxe4 12 dxe4 ♗h7 13 a3 a5 14 h3 ♗b6 15 ♗c3 ♘c5 16 ♘e5 ♖fd8 (Keres-Euwe, AVRO Tournament, Holland 1938), or 9 ♘c3 0-0 10 ♕c2 ♗h7 11 e4 dxe4 (Smyslov-Keres, 19th USSR Championship, Moscow 1951) with equal chances in both cases.

9 ♘bd2 0-0 10 ♖c1

Or 10 a3 a5 11 ♕c2 ♗h7! 12 ♖ac1 (12 ♗c3 b5! equalises Botvinnik-Smyslov, Moscow 12th matchgame 1958) 12...♗d6 with the intention of ...♕e7 and ...e6-e5.

10...a5 11 a3 (to answer ...a5-a4 with b3-b4, avoiding the opening of the a-file) **11...♖e8**

11...♗h7! is slightly more accurate, since then after 12 ♖c2, apart from 12...♖e8, also possible is 12...♘e8!? 13 ♕a1 ♗f6, 12...♕b6!? 13 ♕a1 ♖fd8, or Lasker's 12...♗d6!? 13 ♕a1 ♕e7.



12 ♖c2 ♗h7

The imprudent 12...e5? 13 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 14 ♗xe5 ♗xa3 is refuted by 15 ♗xf6! gxf6 16 cxd5 cxd5 17 e4 with a dangerous initiative.

13 ♕a1 ♗f8

13...♕b6 has also been played (Stein-Tal, Moscow 1971), as well as 13...♗d6 14 ♘e5 ♗f8! (Lobron-Karpov, Lucerne 1985). I think that this position is an altogether barren one for White: he does not even have a hint of an advantage.

14 ♖e1 ♕b6 15 ♗h3 ♗c5

'Black's moves show that he has not yet decided on a definite plan. With the aim of preparing ...e6-e5, ...♗d6 and ...♕b8 looks logical.' (Capablanca) Or 15...♖ad8!? and ...c6-c5.

16 ♖f1 ♗f8 17 ♖cc1 ♖ad8 18 ♖fe1 ♗c5!?

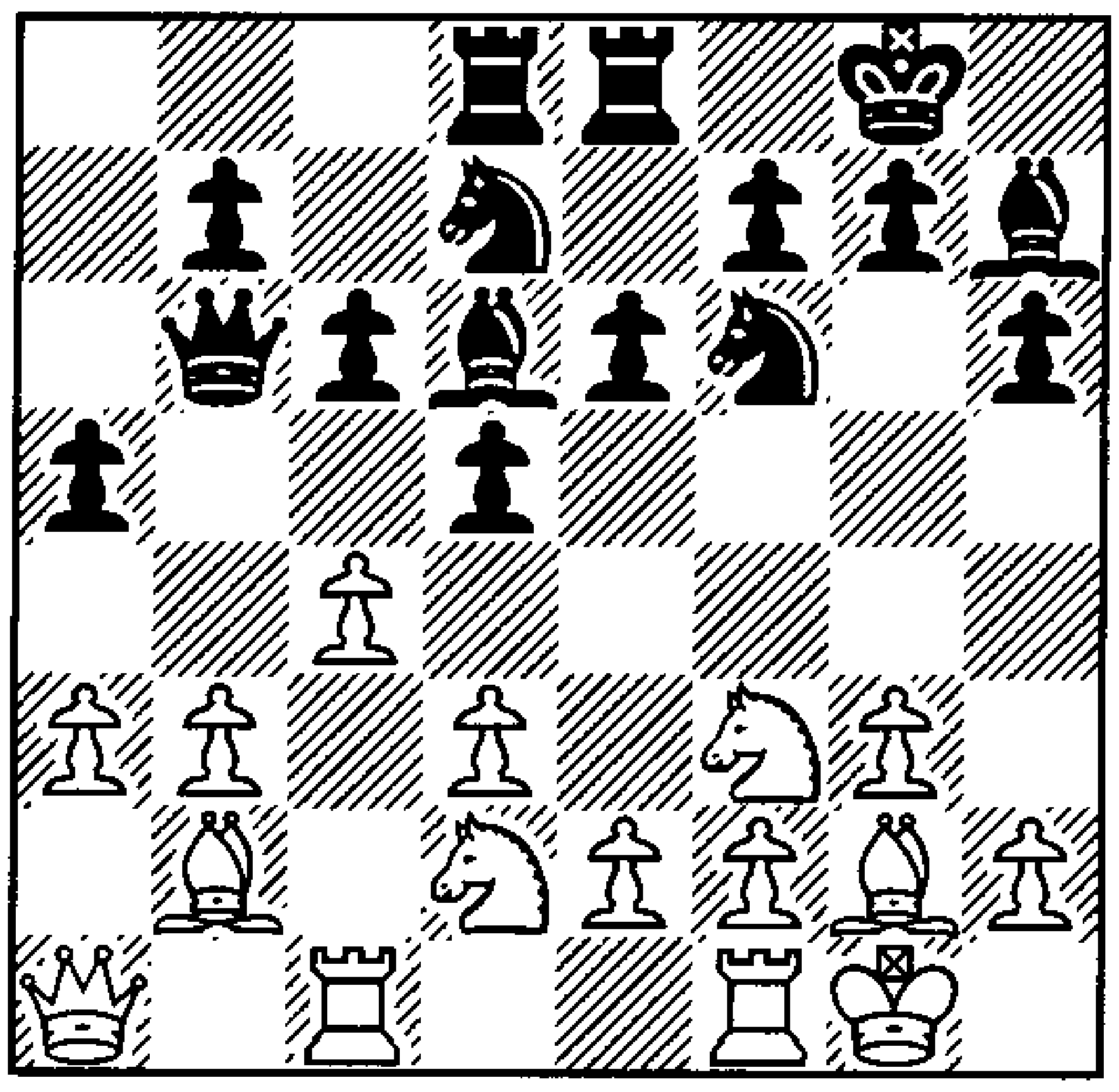
Provoking d3-d4, which would activate the bishop at h7 and give Black a more comfortable game. 18...c5 weakens the centre – 19 e4! dxe4 (worse is 19...d4?! 20 e5 ♘h5 21 ♗g4! ♗g6 22 ♘h4) 20 dxe4 e5 21 ♖e2 ♕c7 22 ♖ce1 and ♘b1-c3-d5 with some advantage.

19 ♖f1!? ♗f8 20 ♗g2

'If 20 ♘e5?! there could have followed 20...♘xe5 21 ♗xe5 ♘d7 22 ♗b2 f6 and then ...e6-e5.' (Capablanca)

20...♗d6

Hinting at ...e6-e5. Now, when the bishop has retreated to g2, 20...c5!? also came into consideration.



21 ♘e5! ♗xe5 (21...♗f8! was more solid) **22 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 23 ♕xe5 ♘d7**

'23...d4? is bad in view of 24 c5 ♕b5 25 ♘c4 ♖e7 26 ♘d6 ♕xb3 27 ♖b1 ♕xa3 28 ♘xb7 ♖c8 29 ♖a1 ♕b4 30 ♘xa5 etc. 23...♘g4?! 24 ♕b2 d4 is also insufficient because of 25 b4, c4-c5 and ♘c4-d6.' (Capablanca) But 23...c5!? 24 ♕c3 d4 and ...e6-e5-e4 is acceptable.

24 ♕b2 ♘f6?!

'Correct is 24...c5! and ...♘b8-c6. White could not take twice on d5 in view of the loss of the e2-pawn.' (Capablanca)

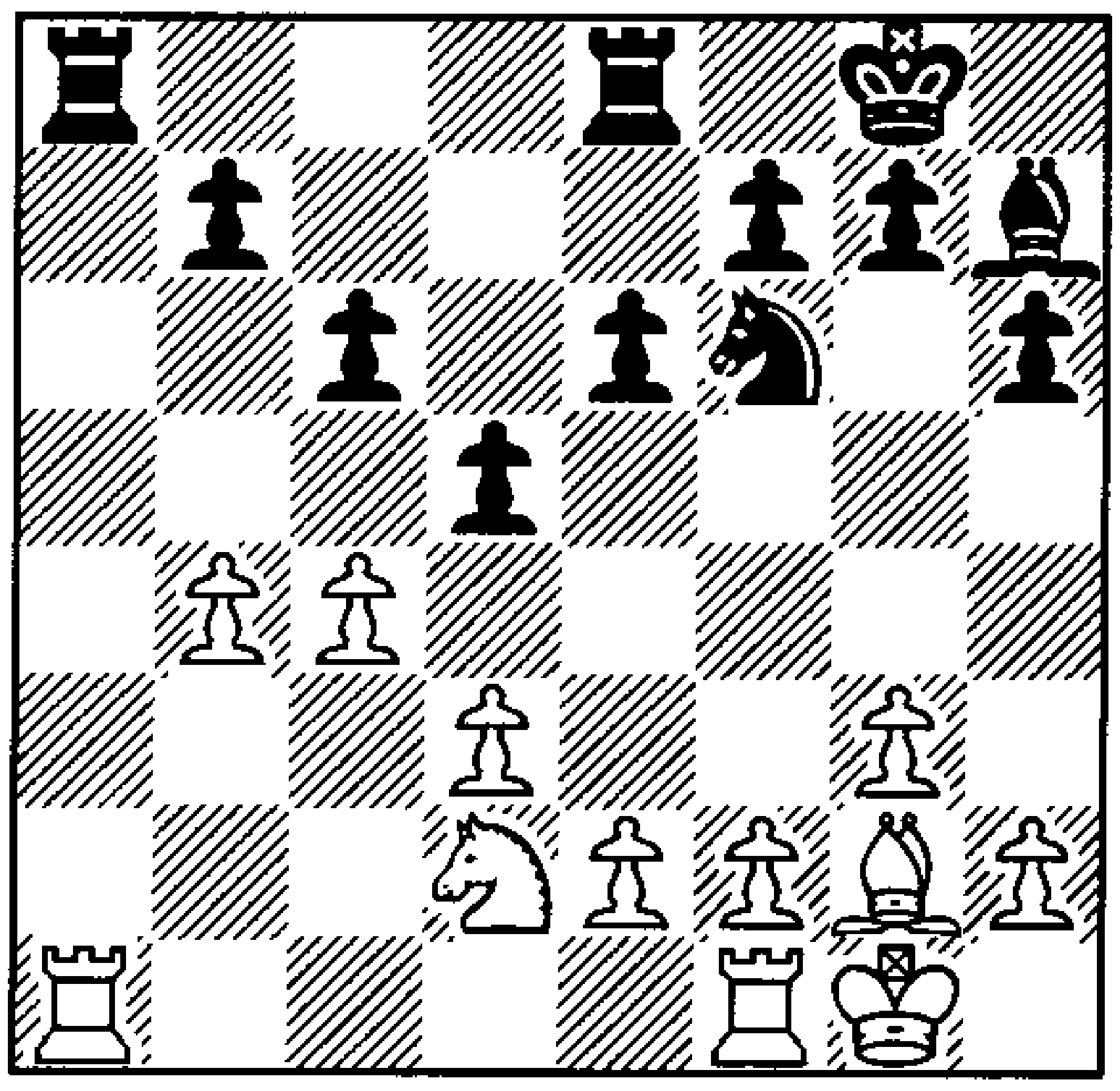
25 b4! axb4 26 ♕xb4! ♕xb4

If 26...♕c7 there would have followed 27 ♖b1 ♖e7 28 ♖b3 with mild but enduring pressure.

27 axb4 ♖a8?

An important moment, on which Capablanca makes no comment! After 27...dxc4 28 ♘xc4 ♖d4 29 ♘a5 ♖xb4 30 ♖b1 White would have regained his pawn with some advantage. But 27...e5! – in order to free the h7-bishop by ...e5-e4 – would have led to exchanges and a rapid draw: 28 cxd5 (28 ♖a1?! e4!) 28...♘xd5 29 b5 cxb5 30 ♖c5 ♘f6 31 ♗xb7 (or 31 ♖xb5 e4!) 31...e4 32 ♗c6 ♖e7 33 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 34 dxe4 ♘xe4 35 ♖xb5 ♘c3.

28 ♖a1



'I had this position in mind back on my 21st move. The ending is advantageous to White: he has a strong-point at a5, enabling him to double rooks on the a-file. In addition, the g2-bishop is strong, whereas the h7-

bishop is out of play for a long time.' (Capablanca)

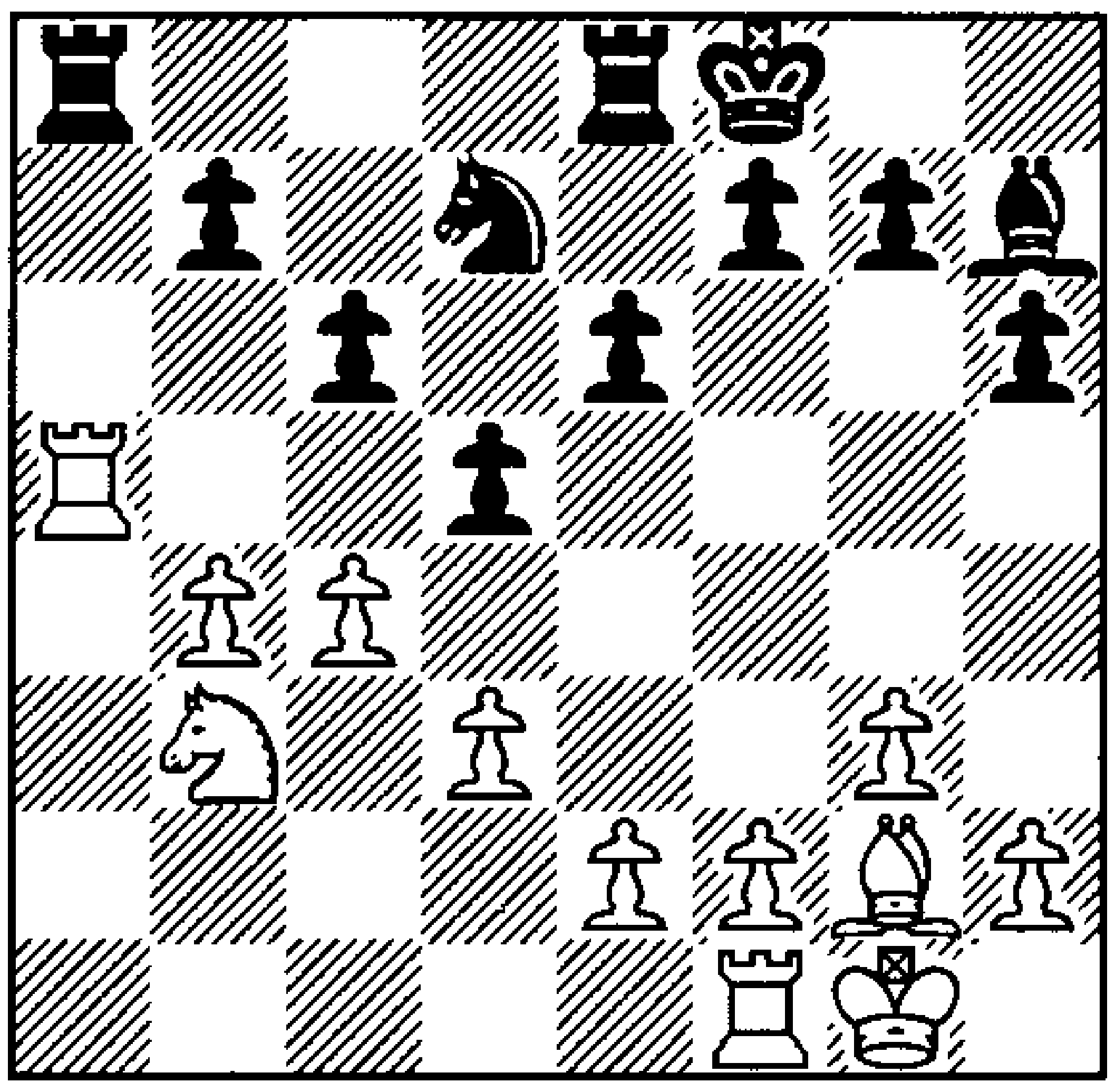
28...♘d7?!

The best chance was still 28...e5!, for example: 29 cxd5 ♘xd5 30 ♗xd5 (30 b5?! ♘c3!) 30...cxd5 31 ♘b3 e4 32 d4 ♗f5, or 29 c5 e4! 30 d4 e3 (30...♗f5!?) 31 fxe3 ♖xa1 32 ♖xa1 ♖xe3 33 ♖a8+ ♖e8 34 ♖xe8+ ♘xe8 35 ♗h3 f5 36 e3 ♘c7 with good chances of a draw.

29 ♘b3 ♔f8

Black's mounting difficulties are illustrated by the variations 29...♘b6?! 30 c5 ♘d7 31 ♖a5! b6 32 cxb6 ♖ab8 33 ♖a7 ♘xb6 34 ♘d4 ♘c8 35 ♖c7 ♖xb4 36 ♘xc6 (with the threat of ♖xc8+) and 29...b6?! 30 b5! cxb5 31 cxd5 e5 (31...exd5 32 ♘d4) 32 d6 etc.

30 ♖a5! (30 c5 e5 31 ♗h3 ♔e7 is unclear)



30...dxc4?

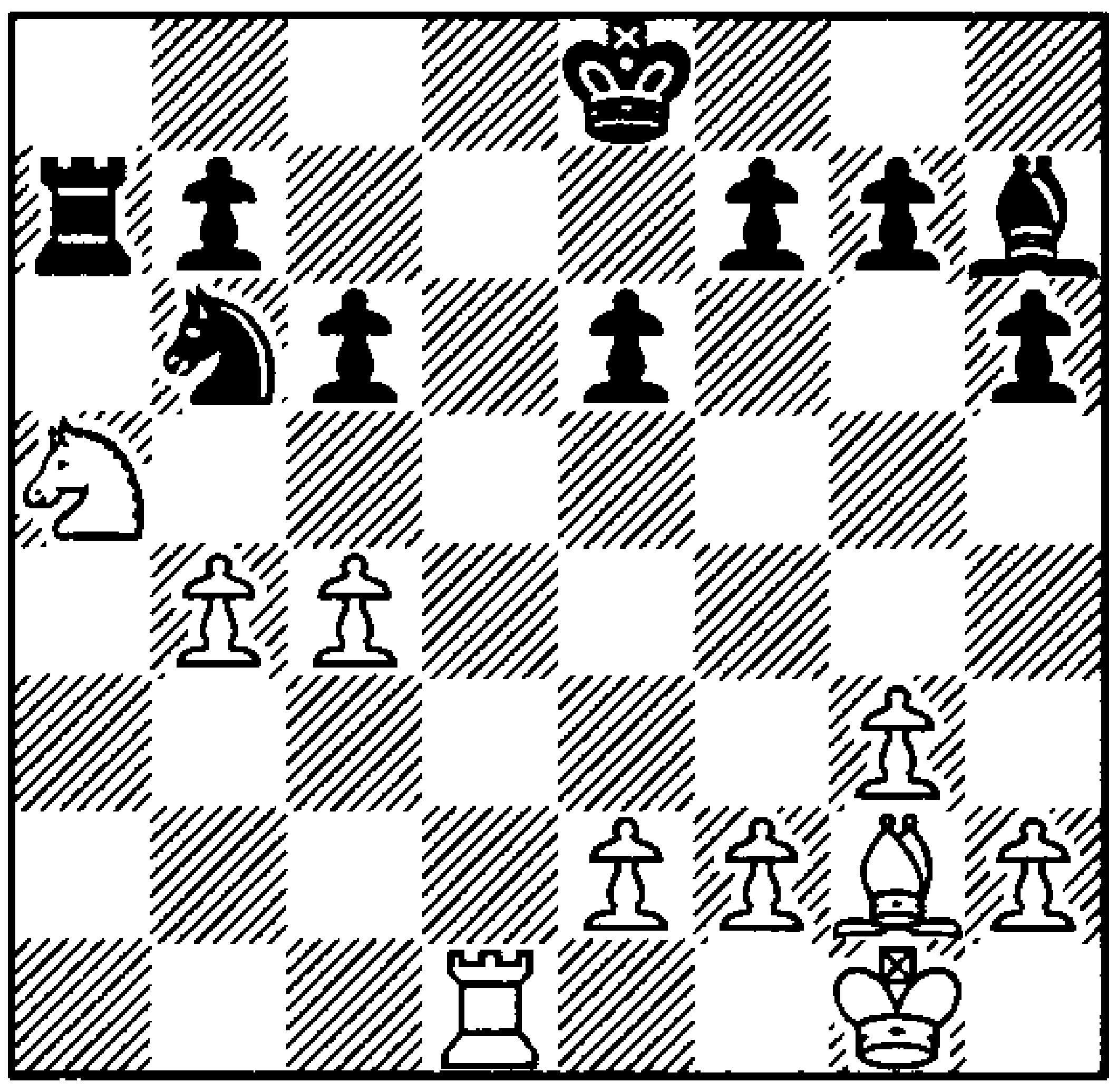
'The decisive mistake. The only defence was 30...♔e7 (*if 30...b6?!, then 31 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 32 b5! cxb5 33 cxd5 e5 34 ♖c1 and d5-d6 is good – G. K.*) 31 ♖fa1 ♖xa5 32 ♖xa5 ♔d6 33 ♖a7 ♔c7 34 ♘a5 ♖b8. Although after 35 c5 Black is blockaded, no forced win for White is apparent.' (Capablanca)

31 dxc4 ♘b6 32 ♖xa8! ♖xa8 33 ♘a5! ♖a7

No better is 33...♖b8 34 ♖d1 e5 (34...♔e7 35 ♗xc6!; 34...♗c2 35 ♖d2 ♗a4? 36 ♖a2 and ♔f1-e1) 35 ♖d6 ♔e8 (35...♔e7 36 ♖xc6!) 36 b5 ♘c8 37 ♖d2 cxb5 38 cxb5 b6 39 ♘c6 winning.

34 ♖d1! (with the threat of 35 ♗xc6 bxc6 36 ♖d8+ ♔e7 37 ♘xc6+) **34...♔e8**

If 34...f6? (34...♔e7? 35 ♗xc6!), then 35 ♖d8+ ♔f7 36 ♖b8 wins.



35 ♘xb7!

'The quickest way to win. The combination gives White a rook and two passed pawns for a bishop and knight. These minor pieces are unable to cope with the passed pawns, supported by the rook.' (Capablanca)

'A typical Capablanca exchanging operation in the endgame. In general he liked playing with rook and two pawns against two minor pieces.' (Botvinnik)

35...♖xb7 36 ♗xc6+ ♖d7 37 c5 ♔e7

Or 37...♘d5 (37...♗e4? 38 ♖xd7!) 38 f3 f5 39 b5 ♔e7 40 ♗xd7 ♔xd7 41 ♖a1! and wins.

38 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 39 c6 ♘b6 40 c7 ♗f5 41 ♖d8

'By 41 e4 ♗g4 42 f3 ♗xf3 43 ♖d8 ♗xe4 44 c8♕ White could have won a piece, remaining with the exchange for a pawn, but this would only have prolonged the game.' (Capablanca)

41...e5 42 ♖b8! (but not 42 b5? ♘c8)

42...♘c8

If 42...♘d5, then 43 c8♕ ♗xc8 44 ♖xc8 ♘xb4 45 ♖c7+ ♔e6 46 e4!

43 b5 ♔d6 44 b6 ♘e7 (44...♔c6 45 b7 etc.)

45 ♖f8

Again there was another way to win – 45 c8♕ ♘xc8 46 b7 ♔c7 47 bxc8♕+ ♗xc8 48 ♖a8.

45...♗c8 46 ♖xf7 ♘d5 (or 46...g6 47 ♖f6+

♔d7 48 h4) **47 ♖xg7 ♘xb6 48 ♖h7 ♘d5 49 ♖xh6+ ♔xc7 50 e4 ♘e7 51 f3 ♔d7 52 h4 ♔e8 53 ♖f6 ♘g8?**

An oversight, but 53...♗d7 54 h5 ♘g8 55 ♖g6 ♔f7 56 ♖g5 would also not have saved the game.

54 ♖c6 1-0

54...♗d7 55 ♖c5 and ♖xe5. This game won the third special prize 'for the best game'!

In the following well-known game with one of the Soviet masters, the 47-year-old ex-champion, after obtaining clearly the better position, did not perhaps play with the accuracy of his former years. But this in no way diminishes the prettiness and instructional importance of this complex endgame.

Game 109
I.Kan-J.R.Capablanca
Moscow 1936, 10th round
Vienna Game C25

1 e4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♗c5

'Theory recommends (in this opening) that the knights should first be developed, but Black wanted to avoid the hackneyed variations with 2...♘f6 3 f4 d5 etc.' (Capablanca)

3 ♘f3 (3 f4 d6 4 ♘f3 is sharper, but Kan is thinking only in terms of a draw) **3...d6 4 ♘a4**

The 'theoretical' 4 d4 exd4 5 ♘xd4 also merely gives White slightly the freer game.

4...♗b6 5 ♘xb6 axb6 6 d4 exd4 (6...♕e7!? Larsen) **7 ♕xd4 ♕f6**

If 7...♘f6, then 8 ♗g5. Capa happily offers the exchange of queens, hoping, not without justification, to outplay his opponent in the endgame.

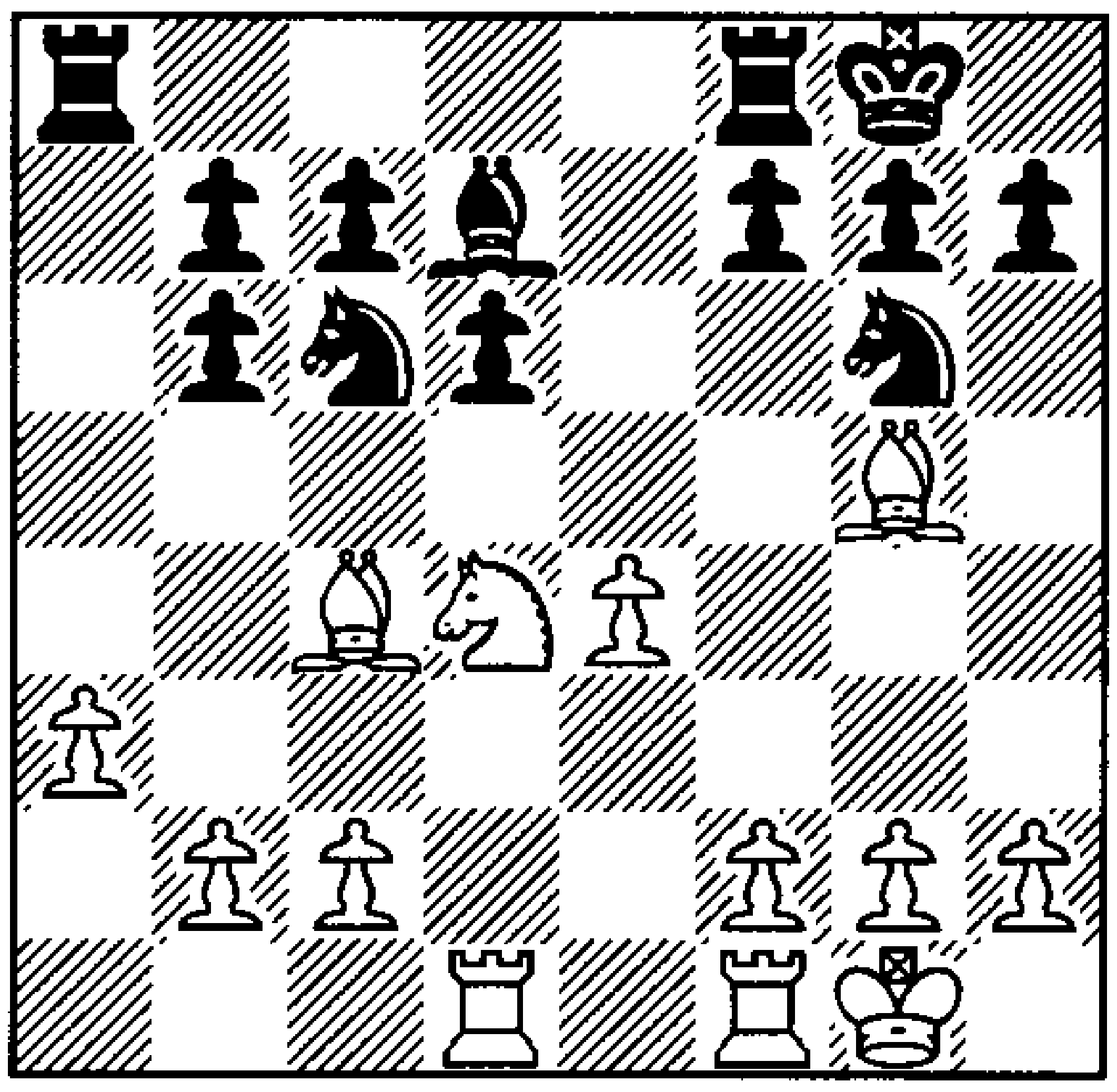
8 ♗g5!?

The well-known game Schlechter-Janowski (San Sebastian 1911) went 8 ♗d3 ♘c6 9 ♕e3 ♘ge7 10 0-0 0-0 11 c3 ♘g6 12 ♘d4 ♘xd4 13 cxd4 ♖a4 with equality.

8...♕xd4 9 ♘xd4 ♗d7 10 ♗c4 (10 ♘b5!?) **10...♘e7 11 0-0 ♘g6**

'Before castling it is necessary to prevent 12 f4, after which there now follows 12...h6 13 f5 ♘e5 winning.' (Capablanca)

12 a3 (12 ♘b5!?) **12...0-0 13 ♖ad1 ♘c6**



14 ♘xc6?!

The first of a series of minor mistakes. 'With this exchange White merely increases the value of the black pawns.' (Capablanca) Here 14 ♘b5?! would now be a blank shot on account of 14...♘ce5 15 ♗e2 ♗xb5 16 ♗xb5 ♖a5 17 ♗e2 ♘f3+! 18 ♗xf3 ♖xg5. But, as the Cuban showed, correct was 14 ♗c1! (14...♖a4?! 15 b3! and 16 a4). I think that if the players were to have changed places, Capa would quickly have shown Kan what is meant by the two bishops and what they are capable of...

14...bxc6 (Black has acquired a compact pawn skeleton, which in the end he is able to exploit) **15 ♗d2?!**

Not realising that 15 ♗c1! should be played as soon as possible, then b2-b3 and a3-a4.

15...♖a4! 16 ♗d3 ♘e5 17 ♗c3 f6 18 f3

Perhaps it would have been better to drive away the knight by 18 f4. White's position is already slightly worse, but as yet he has no particular weaknesses, and Kan decided simply to stand his ground.

18...♖e8 19 ♖f2 (a peaceful outcome seems almost inevitable, but we will not jump to conclusions) **19...♗c8!**

First Capa deprives White of the advantage of the two bishops. In his words, 'in the event of 19...♘xd3?! the opposite-coloured bishops would have assured White of a certain draw.'

20 ♗f1

The manoeuvre ...♗a6 could have been prevented by 20 ♖a1!? with the idea of b2-b3 and a3-a4. Or 20 ♗b4!? (with the same idea) 20...c5 21 ♗c3 and Black has merely a symbolic advantage.

20...♗a6 21 ♗xa6?!

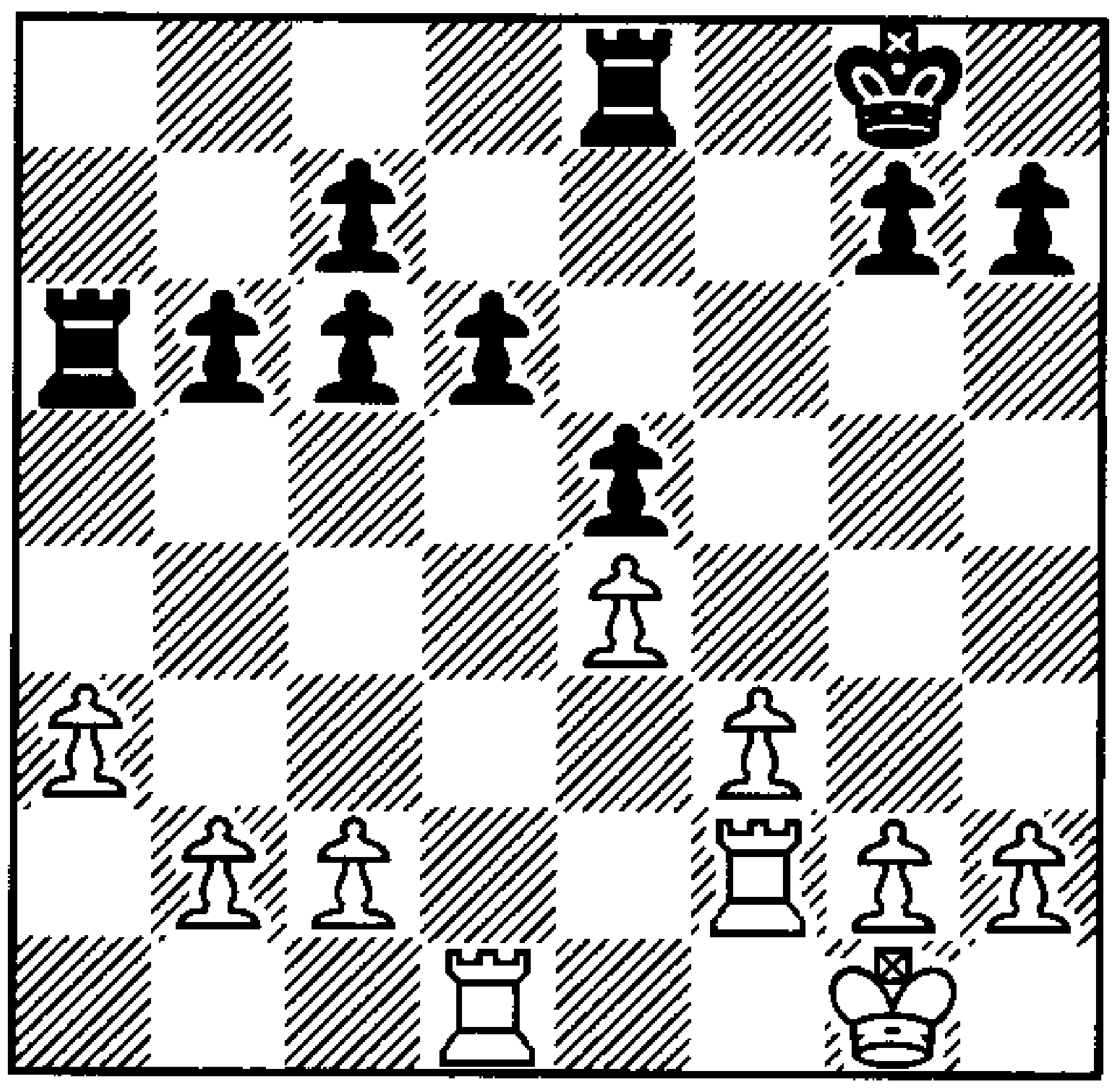
Stronger is 21 ♖d4!, exchanging the active black rook and achieving an objectively drawn position.

21...♖xa6 22 ♗xe5?!

But this exchange improves Black's pawn structure and gives him the possibility of attacking on both wings. Of course, all the same Capa had a fairly clear plan (...c6-c5, ...♘c6, ...♔f7-e6 and ...b6-b5-b4), but as long as White does not take on e5, his position is comparatively safe.

22...fxe5

'It is now clear that Black stands better. His pawn mass is concentrated closer to the centre and his rooks control open files.' (Capablanca) In aiming for a draw, Kan has tried to exchange as many pieces as possible and, as often happens, he has overdone it.



23 ♖d3?!

Black's possibilities would have been restricted by 23 c4!, although here too he would take his king to the centre, play ...c6-c5 and begin an attack with ...g7-g5-g4, to create weaknesses in the enemy position. Of course, with accurate play White should be able to defend (as Capa writes, 'the neutralising tendency of rook endings is significant', but in practice everything is decided by the difference in class...

23...b5! ('just the same', only Black has seized another little bit of space) **24 ♖fd2 c5 25 ♔f2 ♖a4!**

'A timely prevention of White's attempt to free himself by f2-f4.' (Capablanca)

26 ♔e2 ♔f7 27 ♖d1 ♔e6

Now there is the plan of a breakthrough by ...c7-c6 and ...d6-d5, and all the time White has to watch for this. Over some dozen moves his position has been transformed from slightly better to passive and unpleasant.

28 ♔d2

White does not know what to do, and hence he awaits the threats. 28 h4!? came into consideration.

28...♖b8

More direct was 28...♖d8!? (or 28...c4 29 ♖c3 ♖c8!?) with the idea of ...c7-c6 and ...d6-d5. However, Capa's basic principle was not to create weaknesses for himself without extreme necessity. And he defers the advance in the centre until the decisive moment, when the opponent will already be 'ripe'.

29 ♖c3 (or 29 ♔e3 g5; 29 h4!?) **29...g5**

A typical attack by a pawn minority on the kingside. Also suitable was 29...♖f8 30 ♔e3 c4! (30...g5 31 ♖cd3 c4 32 ♖3d2!) 31 ♔d2 c6 with the threat of ...d6-d5-d4 or the preparatory centralisation 29...♖d4+!

30 h3

The alternative plan was to keep the h-file closed: 30 ♔e3 g4 (30...c4 31 ♔d2; 30...c6 31 g3; 30...♖f8 31 ♖cd3) 31 ♖d2 ♖g8 32 ♖b3 etc.

30...h5 (30...♖f8 31 ♔e3 c4 32 ♔d2 with the idea of b2-b3; 30...c6!?) **31 ♖h1**

Neutralising the ...g5-g4 breakthrough, but 31 ♔e3!? would appear to be better.

31...♖d4+ (31...♖g8 32 ♔e2 c6! 33 ♖d3 d5 etc. was also good) **32 ♔e2**

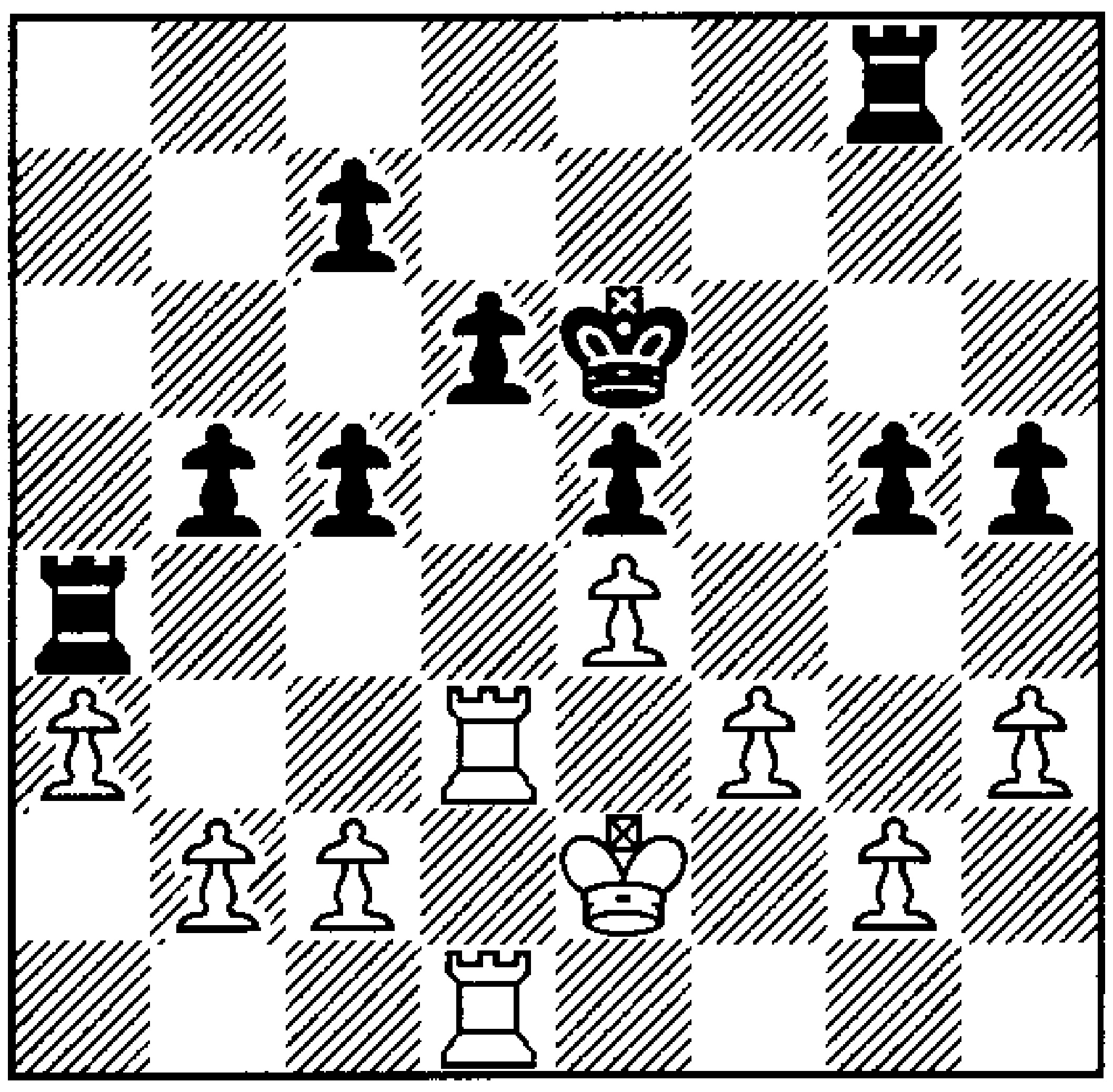
But not 32 ♖d3?! c4 33 ♖xd4 exd4 34 h4

♖g8 and ...♔e5-f4-g3 with an overwhelming advantage for Black.

32...♖g8

'Forestalling a possible h3-h4.' (Capablanca) Again 32...c6!? with the idea of ...c5-c4 and ...d6-d5 was tempting.

33 ♖d3 ♖a4 (it is important to retain the active rook) **34 ♖hd1**



34...g4?!

Euwe, the current world champion, called this game 'the best of all those seen up till then in this tournament: Capablanca plays the endgame with exceptional mastery.' Here it is – the magic of the name and the result! I agree that it all looks logical and pretty, but better was 34...♖b8! (but not immediately 34...c4?! on account of 35 ♖d5) 35 ♖h1 c4 36 ♖d2 ♖g8! followed by ...c7-c6 and ...d6-d5: towards the centre!

35 hxg4 hxg4 36 ♔e3

Conceding the h-file. After 36 ♖h1 gxf3+ 37 gxf3 ♖g2+ 38 ♔d1 b4 (with the threat of ...c5-c4-c3) 39 ♖b3 ♔d7 40 ♔c1 ♔c6 Black would have retained winning chances.

36...♖h8! (the typical seizure of a file) **37 ♖b3!**

'Clearly bad was 37 fxg4? ♖g8 38 ♔f3 ♖f8+ 39 ♔e3 ♖f4. Also after 37 f4?! exf4+ 38 ♔xf4 ♖f8+ 39 ♔e3 ♖h8 *(39...g3!?; 39...♔d7! – G. K.)* White's position is unenviable.' (Capablanca)

37...♖h2 38 ♖d2 ♖d4! (38...c6? 39 fxg4) **39 ♖e2**

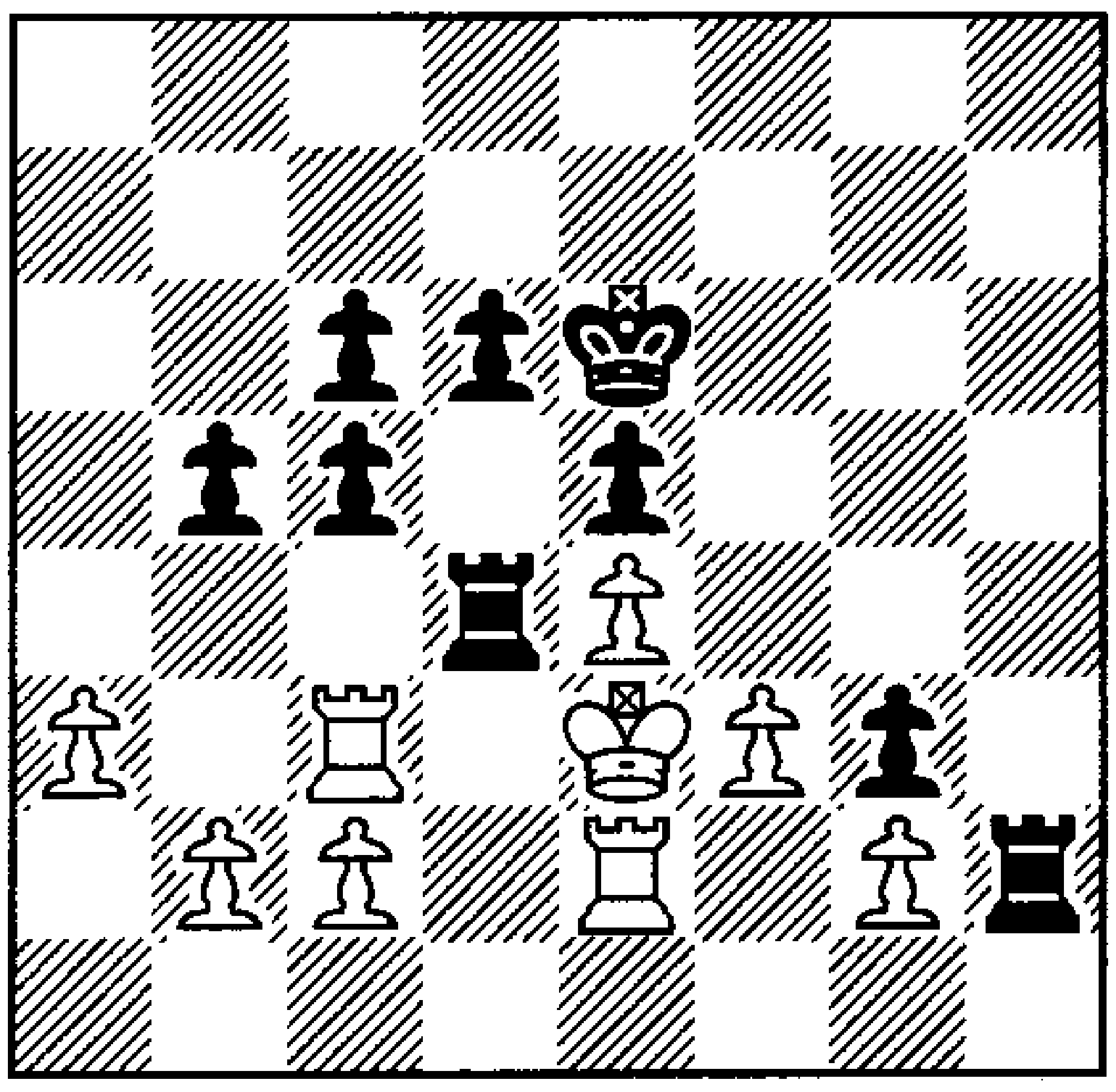
Kan defends with all his might! 39 ♖xd4?! (39 ♖bd3? c4!) 39...cxd4+ 40 ♔f2 gxf3 41 ♔xf3 c6 is advantageous to Black.

39...c6 40 ♖c3

Dubious is 40 f4?! d5! or 40 ♖d3?! ♖h1 41 ♔f2 ♖xd3 42 cxd3 ♖d1 43 ♔e3 g3 etc. However, White could have simply taken the pawn – 40 fxg4, although after 40...c4! (40...♔f6?! 41 ♖d3!) 41 ♖c3 ♔f6 (Capablanca) Black would still have retained some advantage thanks to his strong rook at d4: 42 b3 cxb3 43 cxb3 c5 or 42 ♔f3 ♔g5 43 ♖ce3 ♖h6!

40...g3?!

The last move before the control, and probably made in time-trouble. After 40...♖d1 White has 41 ♖d3, while if 40...c4 or 40...♔f6, then simply 41 fxg4. But 40...♖h1! would still have retained the advantage: 41 fxg4 (41 ♔f2 ♖b1!) 41...♖f1 (with the threat of ...♖f4) 42 g3 c4 43 g5 d5 etc.



41 ♖d3?

The sealed move and, it would appear, the result of the time scramble. 'When I arrived for the start of the adjournment session,' recalls Kan, 'a member of the tournament committee came up to me and said: 'Señor Capablanca offers you a draw, if you have sealed 41 f4.' Alas, I had sealed another move and so I was obliged to "decline" this offer.'

As Capa observed, '41 f4! was the only saving possibility, for example: 41...♖h4 42 fxe5 ♖dxe4+ 43 ♔f3 ♖hf4+ 44 ♔xg3 ♖g4+ 45 ♔f3 ♖xe2 46 ♔xe2 ♖xg2+ 47 ♔f3 ♖h2 48

♔g3 and 49 exd6 drawing.' The computer confirms this evaluation: it is not clear why Black should be any better here. But it would be interesting to know where the commentators, who praised his position, were looking?

41...♖h1! 42 f4?!

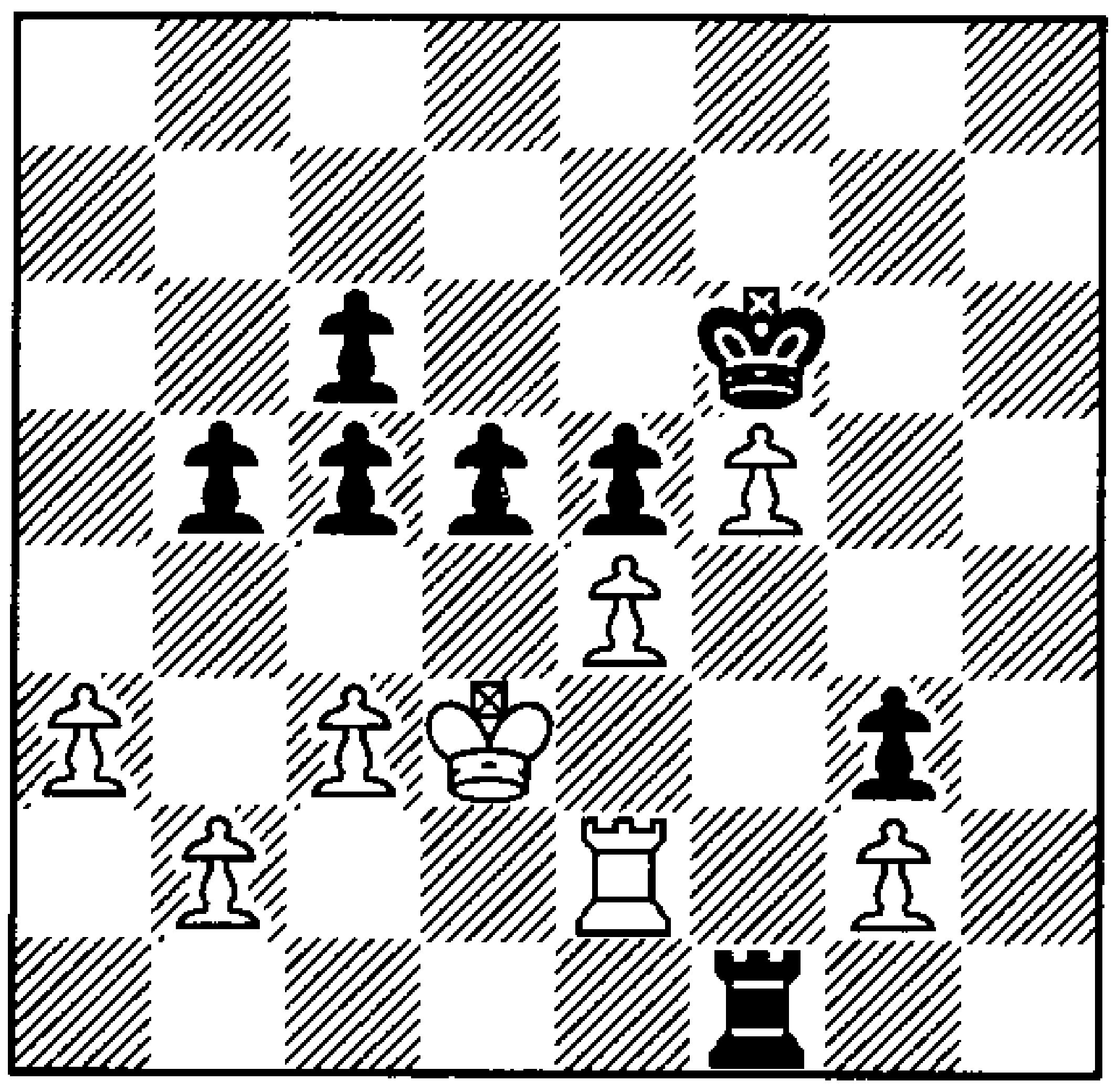
Now this loses, and instantly. After 42 ♖b3 there could have followed 42...c4, then ...♖f1, ...♖dd1 and ...d6-d5, while if 42 c3, then 42...♖xd3+ 43 ♔xd3 d5.

42...♖f1!

Once again a typical endgame manoeuvre: the rook cuts off the king from the g3-pawn. After retaining it, Black begins a decisive breakthrough in the centre and on the queenside.

43 f5+ (no better is 43 fxe5 ♔xe5 44 ♔d2 c4 or 44 ♖xd4 cxd4+ 45 ♔d2 c5 winning) **43...♔f6 44 c3 ♖xd3+ 45 ♔xd3 d5!**

Black's pawn avalanche begins moving, sweeping away everything in its path.



46 b3 (otherwise 46...c4+ 47 ♔e3 ♖f4) **46...c4+**

'46...♖a1! would appear to be the strongest, but the text move is also sufficient.' (Capablanca)

47 bxc4 bxc4+ 48 ♔e3 (if 48 ♔d2 Black would have won by 48...♖a1, while if 48 ♔c2 – 48...d4!) **48...♖a1!**

Clearing the board of white pawns. 48...♖f4 was also good (but not 48...♖c1?! 49 ♖a2!).

49 ♔f3 ♖xa3 50 ♔xg3 (or 50 ♖e3 ♖b3! 51 ♔xg3 d4) **50...♖xc3+ 51 ♔h4 ♖c1! 52 g4**

The last chance: g4-g5.

52...♖h1+ 53 ♔g3 d4 54 ♖a2 d3 55 ♔g2 ♖e1 56 ♔f2 ♖xe4 57 ♔f3 0-1

Finally White resigned. 'The rook ending deserves careful study.' (Capablanca) We have partly fulfilled this behest...

Incidentally, at this tournament Kan made an interesting observation about a joint analysis by Lasker and Capablanca. 'There was a stamp of extraordinary natural talent on the style of Capablanca's analysis. The thoughtful and unhurried manner, with which Lasker analysed a position that interested both ex-champions, was in marked contrast to the almost lightning speed with which Capablanca demonstrated subtle and unexpected variations. It also showed, of course, Capablanca's extraordinarily fine technique.'

After Nottingham 1936, where Capa together with Botvinnik finished ahead of the world champion Euwe, ex-champion Alekhine, Lasker and a whole cohort of contenders (again undefeated, and also with a win against Alekhine!), the press wrote that the Cuban had acquired his earlier form and had good chances of regaining his champion's title. That is also what Capablanca thought, adding: if his health would hold out.

'Of all the questions interesting the chess world, perhaps the most important is the question of the world championship title,' he wrote in *Izvestia* on 10 January 1937, and he admitted a serious mistake that was made in producing the London agreement (1922): 'I did not take into consideration the fact that the world champion, if he desires, is able to delay the moment when he meets a dangerous, in his opinion, opponent.' What was to be done? Capa suggested giving FIDE the right to organise matches for the crown. Euwe was also inclined this way. But six months later, when FIDE nominated the No.1 challenger as... Flohr(!), they saw that this idea was premature.

In the resulting confusion, without waiting for the Euwe-Alekhine return match in the autumn, Capablanca secured the agreement of Euwe to play a match with him in 1939 (a year before the planned FIDE match with Flohr). But the return match was won by Alekhine, and the Cuban's path to the throne was again blocked...

However, Semmering-Baden 1937 and especially the AVRO tournament of 1938, where for the first time in his life Capa finished outside the prize list, in seventh place, last but one, showed that the 50-year-old ex-champion was no longer able to combat the leaders of the new generation; in addition, on his actual birthday he lost to his 'sworn friend' Alekhine (*Game No.147*). The latter, incidentally, later gave a simple explanation for this failure: 'Towards the end of his days Capablanca could still create chess masterpieces, but he no longer had sufficient stamina to achieve practical successes in a big tournament.'

But was it really all so simple? Lasker, for example, retained his stamina and did his utmost to crush the young even in later life... It seems to me that the main reason for the decline in Capablanca's results was the increased complexity of chess, which happened precisely during the last period of his career. The hypermodern ideas had already become established and the 'Soviet Chess School' had announced itself – a different, dynamic and genuinely creative game had begun! Capa tried not to fall behind, but it became increasingly difficult for him. As we have seen, certain problems occurred with him already in the 20s, and in the 30s these were merely aggravated.

And in general Capablanca's heyday was, in my opinion, in the period before he became champion. It was then that he played the most interesting and fresh chess and demonstrated his colossal superiority over his contemporaries. It was on account of this that the myth of his invincibility arose: no one could see the slight, and sometimes serious flaws in his 'ultra-pure' style. But these mistakes were not accidental, and in the match with Alekhine they already became tragic, since they cancelled out all the fruits of his enormous preceding work. Capa was let down by his old illness – a certain carelessness in his play: if it is all succeeding, why exert oneself?

I have come to the paradoxical feeling that the 'Capablanca mystery' is that there is no mystery! Despite his staggering talent (or more probably, because of it), his real contribution to the creation of modern chess was inferior to that of Steinitz and Lasker. Their contribution was enormous and fundamental – they were the founders. Whereas Capablanca, by contrast, did everything possible to simplify the problems facing him, by dividing them into elementary components. Hence the impression that to him it was all easy and understandable – and hence the idea of the drawing death of chess.

For a good hundred years the impression had been created in public consciousness that chess players were a peculiar caste of people, devoted to some mysterious order, and that chess was a game for wise men, sitting in a café with a cup of coffee, thoughtfully smoking a cigar and seeking incredible moves that were unknown to anyone. But Capablanca destroyed this stereotype: to him everything was clear and simple, no mysteries! In 1910 he did indeed resemble Morphy: he arrived, conquered Europe – and again hid himself in America, leaving behind a train of general admiration. There is no doubt that the play of these two geniuses displayed the traditional spirit of the American continent: practicality and clarity. Everything should be nicely ordered!

And then, after the War, Capa altogether became the greatest of idols, since he was 'close to the people' and ideally in keeping with the era, expressing the joyful hopes of the post-war world. A kind of dream champion – handsome, a spoilt child of fortune and a chess god... Meanwhile, an objective analysis of his games shows that Capablanca's contribution to the development of the game was considerably less than the scale of his talent. Of course, his games provide a rich basis for any player's development, but for all his positional discoveries he, alas, did not create anything global.

And if he did create something, it was largely before the First World War. It is a pity that Capa and Lasker did not play their match in 1914: they were both playing very well then, and a battle between them would have been extremely interesting for the future of chess. But, as has occurred many times in chess history, their match did not take place at the right time. By the 1920s Lasker was already beginning to decline, whereas Capablanca's tremendous momentum kept him going. At that time they had no equals (Rubinstein was declining, and Alekhine was only beginning to rise), and no one could force Capa to work. In the absence of any real rivals he played at half power, exploiting his strength only to the extent that it was necessary. Therefore later, however much he tried, he could no longer keep up with chess progress...

The Cuban's last appearances were Margate 1939 (1. Keres – 7½ out of 9; 2-3. Capablanca and Flohr – 6½) and the World Olympiad in Buenos Aires, where Capa, playing for the Cuban team, scored the best result on board 1. It is staggering that after the start of the Second World War he did not lose hopes of a return match with Alekhine and he even conducted discussions with the champion, while the latter was touring South America. Later Alekhine too was aiming for a match, dreaming of escaping from Europe... But it was not to be.

On the evening of 7 March 1942, in the Manhattan Chess Club (where a year earlier Lasker had given his last simultaneous display), Capablanca suddenly suffered a severe headache and began to lose consciousness. He was rushed to hospital and the following morning, in the arms of his wife Olga, he died of a brain haemorrhage... Havana buried its national hero with state honours.

In conclusion – another mosaic of noteworthy opinions by the champions.

Lasker: 'I have known many chess players, but among them there has been only one genius – Capablanca! His ideal was to win by manoeuvring. Capablanca's genius reveals itself in his probing of the opponent's weak points. The slightest weakness cannot escape from his keen eye.'

Alekhine: 'Capablanca was snatched too early from the chess world. With his death we have lost a great chess genius, the like of whom we will never see again.'

Botvinnik: 'Capablanca's play produced and still produces an irresistible artistic effect. In his games a tendency towards simplicity predominated, and in this simplicity there was a unique beauty of genuine depth.'

Tal: 'Without technique it is impossible to reach the top in chess, and therefore we all try to borrow from Capablanca his wonderful, subtle technique.'

Petrosian: 'I was brought up on the games of Capablanca and Nimzowitsch, and they became part of my chess flesh and blood.'

Fischer: 'Capablanca was among the greatest of chess players, but not because of his endgame. His trick was to keep his openings simple, and then play with such brilliance in the middlegame that the game was decided – even though his opponent didn't always know it – before they arrived at the ending.

'Capablanca never really devoted himself to chess, seldom made match preparations. His simplicity is a myth. His almost complete lack of book knowledge forced him to push harder to squeeze the utmost out of every position. Every move he made had to be super-sharp so as to make something out of nothing. His play was forced. He had to try harder than anybody else because he had so little to begin with.'

Karpov: 'The ideal in chess can only be a collective image, but in my opinion it is Capablanca who most closely approaches this... His book was the first chess book that I studied from cover to cover. Of course, his ideas influenced me.'

CHAPTER FIVE

Alexander the Fourth

Alexander Alexandrovich Alekhine (31 October 1892 – 24 March 1946) has been called a 'genius of chess combinations'. However, his fantastic combinative vision was based on a sound positional foundation, and was the fruit of strong, energetic strategy. Therefore Alekhine can safely be called the pioneer of the universal style of play, based on a close interweaving of strategic and tactical motifs.

Alekhine was clearly ahead of his time in his approach to chess. According to my theory, the game of chess consists of three components: *material, time* and *quality of position.* And every player makes use of them as far as possible. With *material* everything is clear: on this arithmetic level even a computer 'thinks': extra pawn, extra piece – this is the ABC of chess science. The second factor – *time* – is more complicated, but also understandable: the gain of a tempo, the speed of a passed pawn's advance or of the storming of the king's fortress. By sacrificing material for a swift attack, it is precisely time that we take into account... The third – *quality of position* – is the least obvious, strategic factor: pawn structure, strong and weak squares, active and passive pieces, two bishops, 'bad' king... Here evaluation is a question of intuition, and an understanding of this factor is already a sign of great mastery. Well, and the highest skill is a subtle appreciation of all three factors! The ability to weigh up everything 'for' and 'against', to sacrifice something for the sake of weakening certain squares or, say, to spoil one's pawns for the sake of a couple of tempi. This is accessible to very few: here one needs intuition, experience, God-given talent...

And so, Alekhine was the first who began intuitively to combine all three factors in his play, linking them together. He demonstrated clearly that material is only one of the forms of advantage. In creating a certain type of position, he would sacrifice a pawn or two, or even a piece! Sometimes he would overstep the mark, but on the whole he proceeded on the basis that chess is highly diverse and that the sacrifice of material, which was strictly regulated by the Steinitz School, can in fact provide other advantages. And frequently Alekhine set his opponents problems with which they could not cope: they were unable to compete on such a level of complexity of play.

The masters of the next generation, headed by Botvinnik and Keres, already sacrificed more boldly: it had become a standard method! And in later years this fertile ground gave rise to Bronstein, Spassky, Tal...

Chigorin's Successor

Alekhine grew up and for many years lived in Moscow, on the Arbat, close to Smolensk Square, literally a few steps from my present home... He was the third child in the family of a hereditary nobleman, where both adults and children were keen on chess. He began playing at the age of seven, and his main opponent became his older brother Alexey. Later their house was visited by some well-known masters of sharp combinative style, such as Nenarokov, Blumenfeld and Duz-Khotimirsky, and the latter even gave the future champion some paid lessons.

It should be said that in the transition period between the 19th and 20th centuries Moscow was a major chess centre, the second in Russia after St Petersburg: here the Lasker-Steinitz return match (1896/97) took place, as well as the 1st and 2nd all-Russian tournaments (1899 and 1900/01), where Chigorin won, and here there were visits by foreign stars, including Pillsbury with his record blindfold simultaneous display (1902). Good nourishment for the growth of a young talent! Alekhine was so infatuated with chess that during school lessons, according to one of his fellow-pupils, he 'used to switch off from his surroundings and was not always fully aware of where he was.' Once during an algebra test he suddenly leaped up and looked round the class with shining eyes, as usual twisting with his left hand his ginger forelock. 'Well, Alekhine, have you solved it?' asked the teacher. 'Yes... I sacrifice the knight, and White wins!' The class burst out laughing...

From the age of 12 Alekhine played seriously, mainly by correspondence, developing his analytical powers. He won a gambit correspondence tournament of the magazine *Shakhmatnoe obozrenie* (1905-1906) and in the autumn of 1907 he took part in over-the-board tournaments of the Moscow Chess Society, displaying amazing resourcefulness in difficult positions. As he later recalled, he even developed an unusual psychological weakness, which he was able to rid himself of only after a long time and with difficulty: 'The impression that, on ending up in a bad position, I can always think up some unexpected combination and with the help of it escape from all my difficulties. A dangerous delusion!'

The idols of Alexander and Alexey were Morphy, Anderssen, La Bourdonnais and, of course, Chigorin, who in those years wrote popular chess columns in the magazine *Niva* and the newspaper *Novoe Vremya.* Already then there were mentions in the press about the Alekhine brothers, 'of whom the younger, 15-year-old, is unusually talented.' Duz-Khotimirsky related how a well-known player once whispered to him: 'I have discovered a future world champion!' And, sighing, he added: 'For the moment he is only a Moscow schoolboy.'

In the summer of 1908 Alekhine went to Dusseldorf, to the 16th Congress of the German Chess Union, where he took part in a subsidiary tournament with the master norm. He wasn't able to achieve it straightaway, but his foreign debut was not a bad one: a share of 4th-5th places (+8 -3 =2). Alekhine also played two short matches there: with Bardeleben (4½-½) and Fahrni (1½-½). And the main thing – at precisely that time in Dusseldorf the Lasker-Tarrasch match for the world championship was starting, and the youngster was fortunate enough to observe with his own eyes four games of this historic battle (two of them being *Games No. 53 and 54*). The power of the Lasker intellect created an indelible impression on him...

In February 1909 a major international congress in memory of Chigorin, who had died a year earlier, was held in St Petersburg. I should remind you that victory in the main tournament was shared by Lasker and Rubinstein, who finished 3½ points ahead of their nearest rivals (although, strangely enough, they both lost to Duz-Khotimirsky!). But the secondary, all-Russian amateur tournament produced a real sensation: it was won by the youngest, 16-year-old participant: 1. Alekhine – 13 out of 16; 2. Rotlewi – 12; 3. Gregory – 11½ etc. Alexander became a master and many saw him as a worthy successor to Chigorin.

In 1910 Alekhine finished school and in the summer he travelled to Hamburg, to the 17th Congress of the German Chess Union, where he played in his first big international tournament: 1. Schlechter – 11½ out of 16; 2. Duras – 11; 3. Nimzowitsch – 10½; 4. Spielmann – 10; 5-6. Marshall and Teichmann – 9½; 7-8. Alekhine and Duz-Khotimirsky – 8½ etc.

A similar result was achieved by the talented 18-year-old master in Carlsbad 1911 (this tournament was overshadowed by San Sebastian, where the 22-year-old Capablanca performed brilliantly): 1. Teichmann – 18 out of 25; 2-3. Rubinstein and Schlechter – 17; 4. Rotlewi – 16; 5-6. Marshall and Nimzowitsch – 15½; 7. Vidmar – 15; 8-11. Alekhine, Duras, Leonhardt and Tartakower – 13½ etc.

After observing the following game, Schlechter, the recent contender for the chess crown, was so captivated by Alekhine's play that he exclaimed: 'This is a future world champion!'

Game 110

A.Alekhine-M.Vidmar

Carlsbad 1911

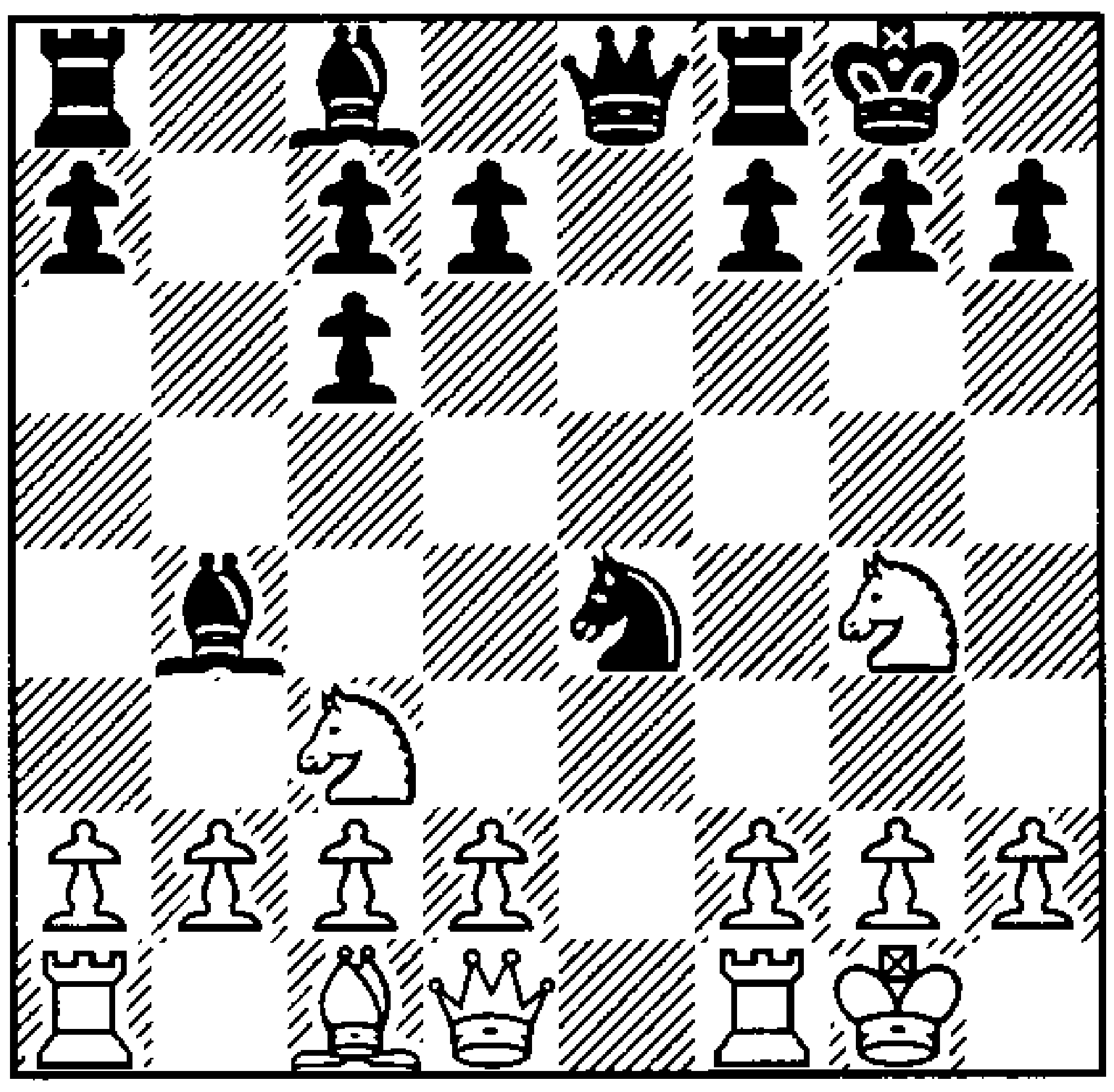
Four Knights Game C49

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗b5 ♗b4 5 0-0 0-0 6 ♗xc6 (following Nimzowitsch!) **6...bxc6?!** (6...dxc6 – *Game No.88*) **7 ♘xe5 ♕e8 8 ♘g4**

Typical of Alekhine: his sights are set on the enemy king! After 8 ♘d3! White has some advantage thanks to his superior pawn structure.

8...♘xe4?

Underestimating the tactical resources. Correct is 8...♘xg4 9 ♕xg4 d5 10 ♕h4 ♗xc3 11 bxc3 ♕xe4 12 ♕xe4 dxe4 with equality.



9 ♘h6+! (an unexpected tactical blow!) **9...♔h8**

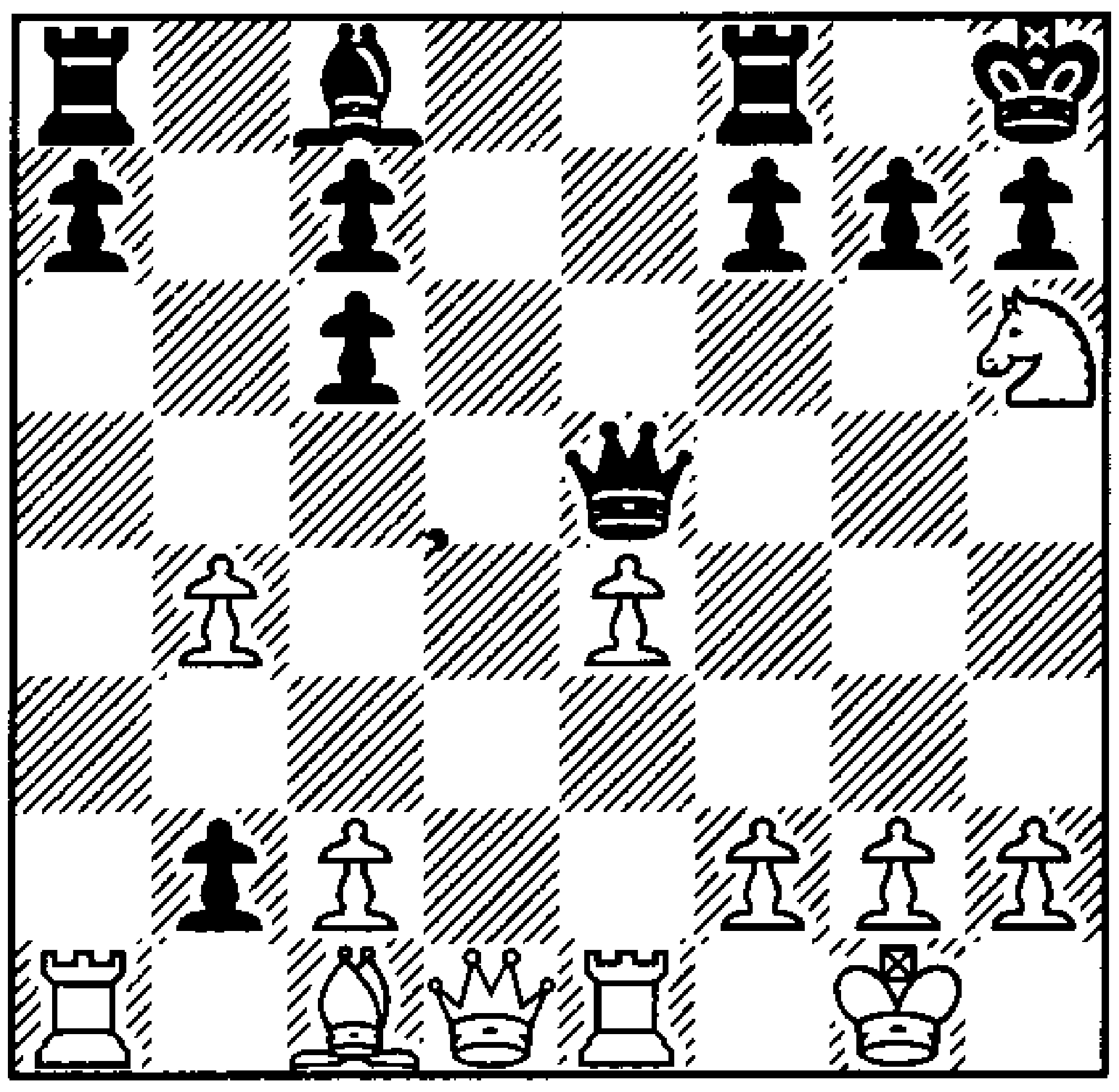
'It would have been comparatively better for Black to remove the audacious knight, though in that case too White's game would have remained superior after 10 ♕g4+ ♔h8 11 ♕xe4 ♕xe4 12 ♘xe4 ♗e7 13 d3 f5 14 ♘c3 f4 15 ♖e1 followed by ♖e4.' (Alekhine)

10 ♖e1 d5 11 d3 ♕e5

11...♘xc3 12 bxc3 ♗e7 did not work on account of 13 ♕h5! ♗e6 14 f4! with the threat of 15 f5 and 16 ♗a3!

12 dxe4 d4! 13 a3! dxc3 14 axb4 cxb2

It would appear that with the help of tactical trickery Black has emerged unscathed. But that is not the case!



15 ♘xf7+!

'Equally good was 15 ♖b1!? ♕e6 (if 15...bxc1♕, then 16 ♘xf7+! ♔g8 17 ♘xe5 etc.) 16 ♖xb2 gxh6 17 ♖b3 and Black cannot hold his h6-pawn. But I did not want to give him counter-chances associated with the open g-file, especially as the move in the game seemed to be simpler and equally certain.' (Alekhine)

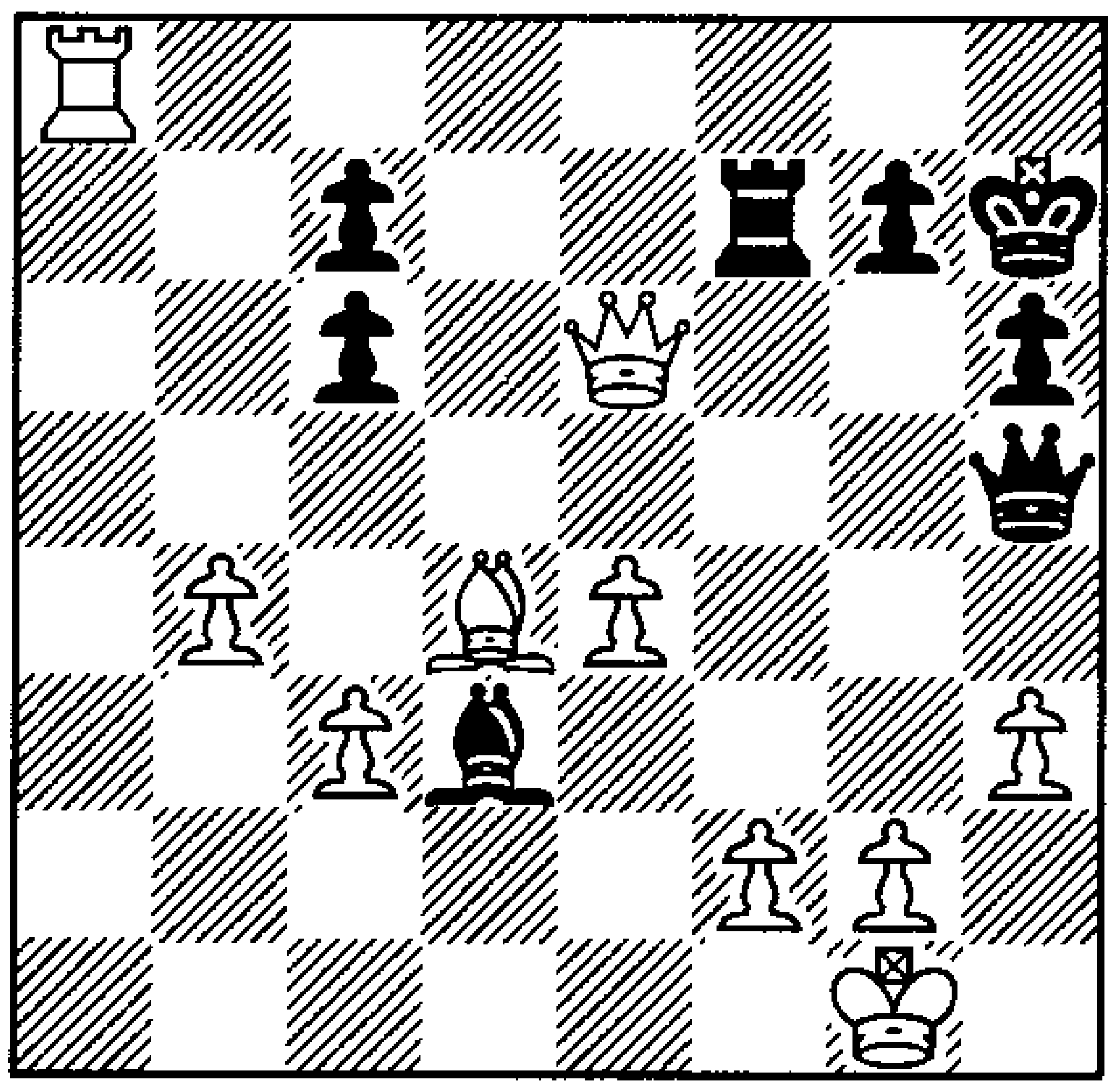
15...♔g8 16 ♖b1! ♖xf7

Even more hopeless was the variation 16...bxc1♕ 17 ♘xe5! ♕f4 18 ♘d3: White simply has four pawns against two on the kingside.

17 ♗xb2 ♕g5 18 ♕d3 (parrying 18...♗h3) **18...♗e6 19 ♗d4!** (with the intention of 20 ♖a1) **19...♖d8 20 ♕e3 ♕b5**

If 20...♕xe3 21 ♗xe3 a6 Alekhine gives 22 ♖ed1 ♖fd7 23 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 24 f3 ♔f7 25 ♖a1 ♗c4 26 ♔f2 followed by ♔e1, ♖a3-c3-c5 and c2-c4 winning.

21 ♗xa7 ♕a4 22 c3 ♗c4 23 ♗d4 ♖a8 24 ♕d2 h6 25 h3 ♕b5 (otherwise 26 ♕b2 and 27 ♖a1) **26 ♖a1 ♖a4 27 ♕c2 ♖xa1 28 ♖xa1 ♗d3 29 ♖a8+ ♔h7 30 ♕a2 ♕h5** (30...♗c4 31 ♕a7 and then ♕b8 or ♖b8) **31 ♕e6!**



31...♗f1!

'Black has no satisfactory defence and so he can without danger indulge in this little pleasantry.' (Alekhine)

32 ♖a5 ♕d1 33 ♔h2 ♗xg2 34 ♔xg2 (but not 34 ♕xf7?? ♕h1+ 35 ♔g3 ♕xh3+ 36 ♔f4 ♕f3+ and 37...♕xf7) **34...♕f3+ 35 ♔g1 ♖f4 36 ♖a8!** (threatening mate with the move ♖h8+) **36...♖f7 37 ♕g4 ♕d3 38 ♖f8! 1-0**

That same autumn Alekhine moved to St Petersburg, where he entered the Imperial Law School and began writing a chess column in the newspaper *Novoe Vremya.* During the summer holidays of 1912 he won in Stockholm the championship of northern countries: 1. Alekhine – 8½ out of 10; 2. E. Cohn – 7; 3. Marco – 6½; 4. Olland – 5½; 5. Spielmann – 5. The All-Russian master tournament held shortly afterwards in Vilna showed that the youngster was already among the leading players in the country: 1. Rubinstein – 12 out of 18; 2. Bernstein – 11½; 3. Levitzky – 11; 4. Nimzowitsch – 10½; 5. Flamberg – 9; 6-7. Alekhine and Levenfish – 8½ etc.

Early in 1913 Alekhine won a match in St Petersburg against Levitzky (+7 -3) and in the summer a tournament in Scheveningen with 11½ out of 13 (half a point ahead of Janowski). It became clear that a new, bright star had risen in the chess sky. Gradually Alekhine began to conquer the world with his magical combinations, which have already charmed many generations of chess enthusiasts.

Game 111

J.Mieses-A.Alekhine

Scheveningen 1913

Centre Game C22

1 e4 e5 2 d4 exd4 3 ♕xd4

'It is quite evident that such displacements of the queen at an early stage in the opening are not likely to reap any advantage. However, Black is compelled to play with precision.' (Alekhine)

3...♘c6 4 ♕e3 ♗e7

'Black could also have played 4...♘f6, for the following variation is mere bluff and eventually turns to Black's advantage: 5 e5 ♘g4 6 ♕e4 d5! 7 exd6+ ♗e6 8 ♗a6 (or 8 dxc7 ♕d1+!) 8...♕xd6 9 ♗xb7 ♕b4+! 10 ♕xb4 ♘xb4.' (Alekhine) And if 5 ♘c3, then 5...♗b4 or 5...♗e7, as in the present game.

An alternative is 4...g6 or 4...♗b4+ 5 ♘c3 (5 c3 ♗e7 and ...♘f6) 5...♘ge7 6 ♗d2 0-0 7

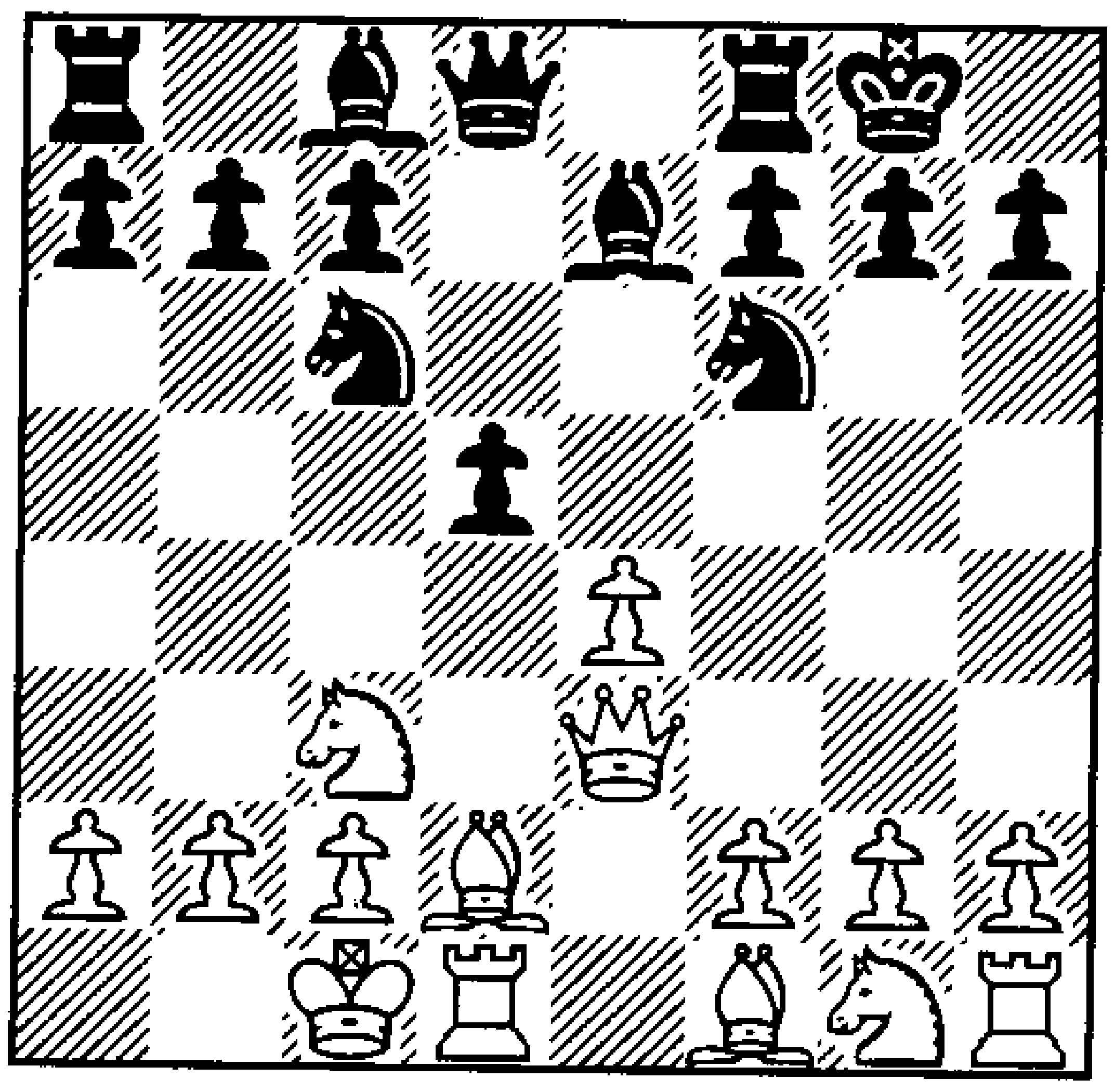
0-0-0 d6 8 ♕g3 ♔h8 9 f4 f5 equalising (Tolush-Botvinnik, 13th USSR Championship, Moscow 1944).

5 ♗d2?!

With this move order White has the opportunity for 5 ♕g3!? ♘f6 6 e5 (but not 6 ♕xg7? ♖g8 7 ♕h6 ♖g6 8 ♕e3 ♘xe4! 9 ♗d3 d5) 6...♘h5 7 ♕e3.

5...♘f6 6 ♘c3 0-0 (or immediately 6...d5!? as in Chigorin-Znosko-Borovsky, St Petersburg 1906) **7 0-0-0 d5!**

This is stronger than 7...♖e8 (Mason-Chigorin, Paris 1900), to which 8 ♗c4 is a good reply. The move in the game, according to Alekhine, 'will allow Black to extract the maximum return from his advanced development.'

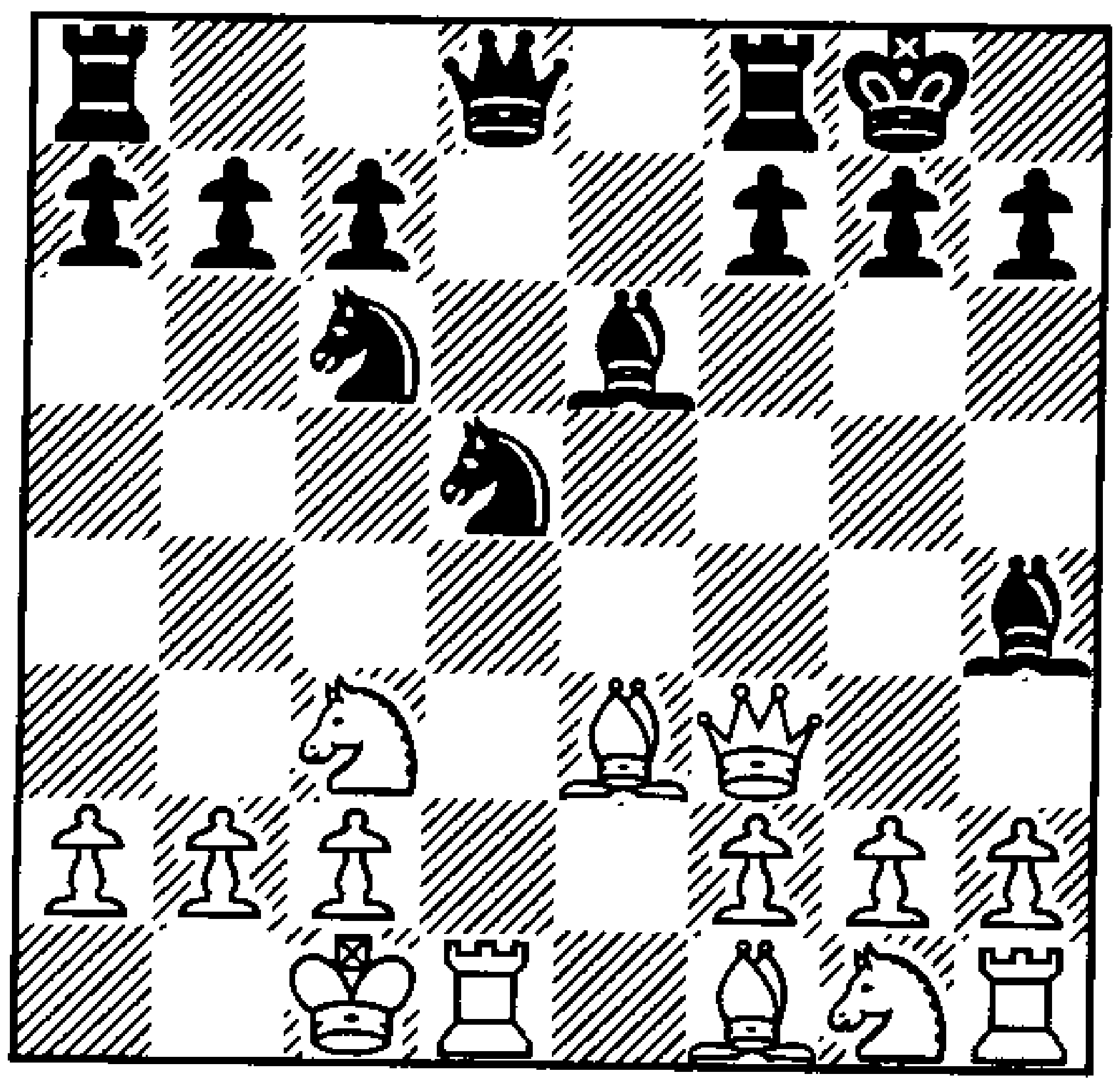


8 exd5 ♘xd5 9 ♕g3 ♗h4! (parrying with gain of tempo the threat of 10 ♗h6) **10 ♕f3 ♗e6**

'The sacrifice initiated by this move is full of promise and on the other hand devoid of risk. It would, however, have been more logical to adopt the following variation: 10...♘xc3 11 ♗xc3 ♕g5+ 12 ♗d2 (else 12...♗g4) 12...♕c5! 13 ♗e3 ♕a5 which would have given Black a dominating position without such complications as defy exact calculation.' (Alekhine)

11 ♗e3!

Inferior is 11 ♗f4 (11 ♔b1? ♘d4!) 11...♘xc3! 12 ♖xd8 ♘xa2+ 13 ♔b1 ♖axd8 14 ♗xc7? ♖d2 15 c3 ♖c8 etc.

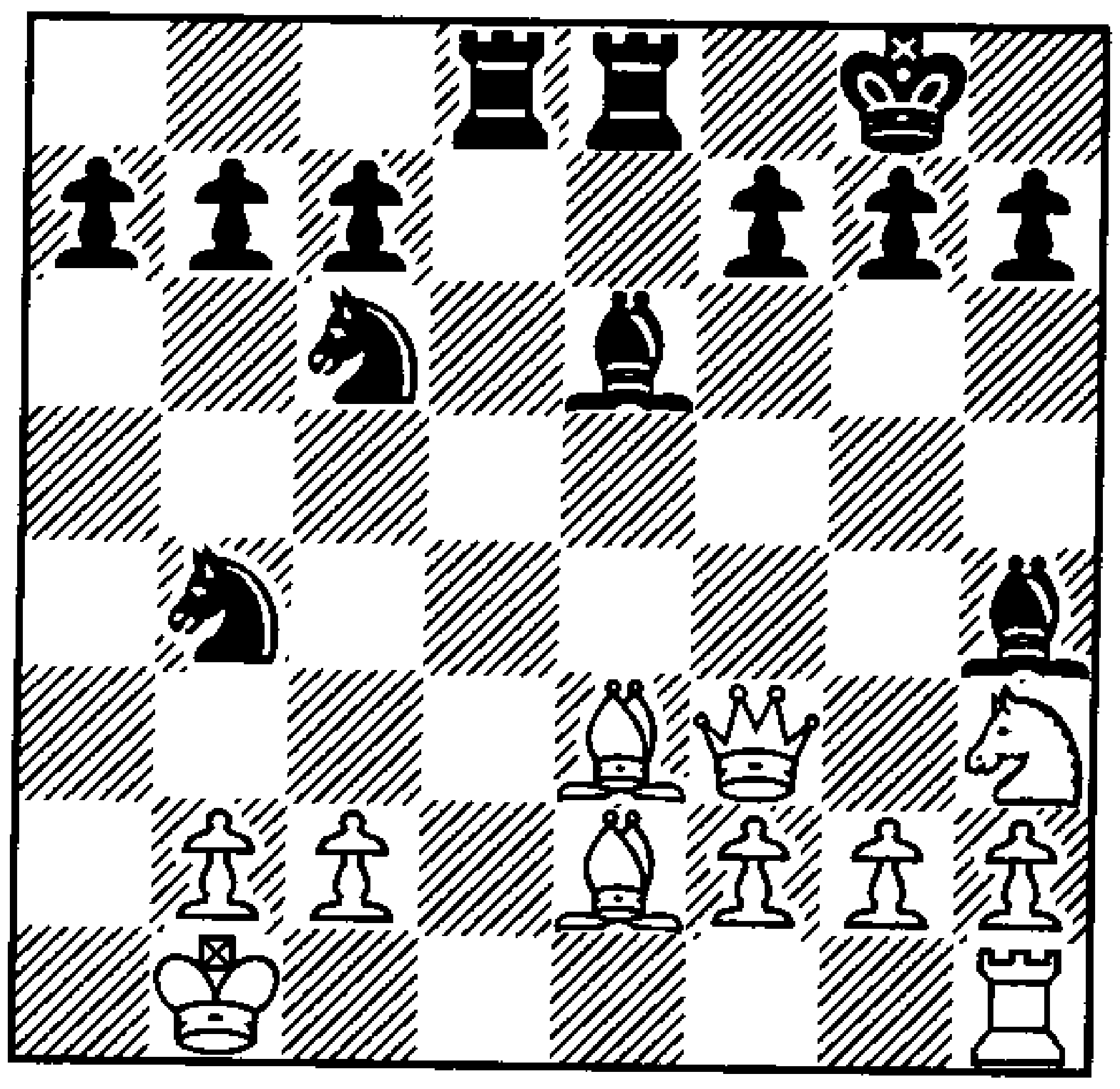


11...♘xc3!

'Much less strong would be 11...♘cb4 12 a3 ♘xc3 13 ♖xd8 ♘ba2+ 14 ♔d2 ♘b1+ 15 ♔e1, and the two black knights would find themselves in a tragi-comical situation.' (Alekhine)

12 ♖xd8 ♘xa2+ 13 ♔b1 ♖axd8 14 ♗e2 ♘ab4 15 ♘h3 ♖fe8

'Essential as a basis for all the subsequent combinations.' (Alekhine) In my opinion 15...♗d5!? 16 ♕g4 ♗f6 or the immediate 15...♗f6 should also be studied, since the position after the queen sacrifice looks far more promising for Black than the one reached in the game before the 22nd move.

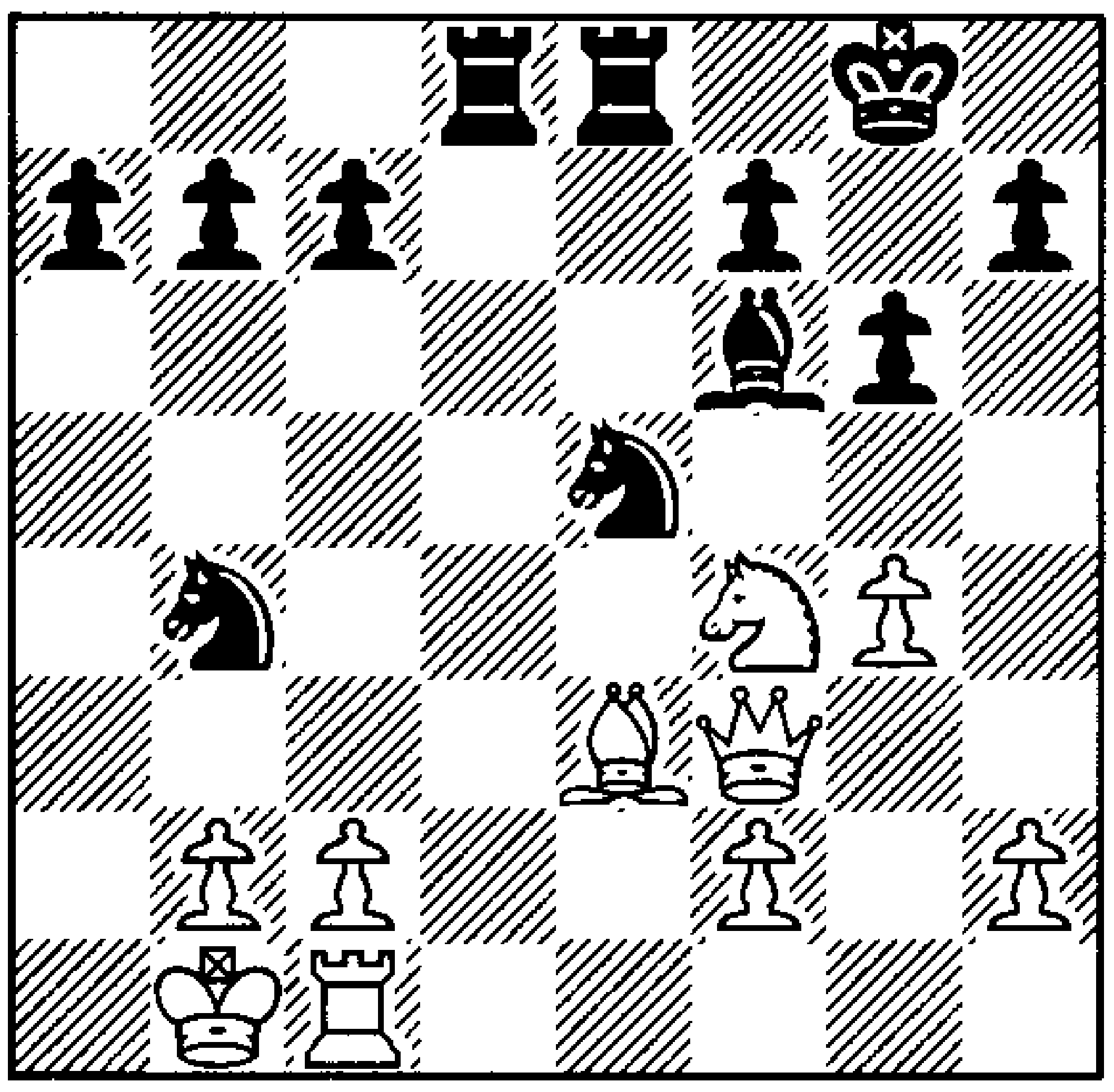


16 ♘f4 (if 16 ♖d1, then 16...♗d5 17 ♕h5 ♗f6 with the threat of 18...♗e4 is unpleasant) **16...♗f5 17 ♖c1 g6?!**

Threatening 18...♘xc2 and ...♘b4. If immediately 17...♘xc2? 18 ♖xc2 ♘b4, then 19

♘d3! ♗e4 20 ♘xb4! But even so, 17...♘d4! would appear to be more energetic.

18 g4! (to exchange the dangerous bishop) **18...♗e4 19 ♕h3 ♗f6** (19...♗g5 20 ♗f3!) **20 ♗f3 ♗xf3 21 ♕xf3 ♘e5**



22 ♕e2

Aiming for further simplification by 23 c3 ♘bd3 24 ♘xd3 ♘xd3 25 ♖d1.

According to Alekhine, 22 ♕xb7!? would have lost due to the combined attack of the f6 bishop and the rook on the b-file. However, after 22...♖b8 (22...♘xg4 23 ♗xa7) 23 ♕g2! (23 ♕xc7 ♘ec6!, but 23 ♕xa7?! is indeed dangerous because of 23...♘c4! 24 c3 ♘c6) 23...♘c4 24 c3 no good continuation for Black is apparent: 24...♘xb2 25 cxb4!, 24...♘a6 25 ♕c6! ♖xb2+ 26 ♔a1 ♖eb8 27 ♕xc4 ♖2b5 28 ♖c2, or 24...♘a2 25 ♔xa2 ♖xb2+ 26 ♔a1 etc.

22...c5! (in some cases this pawn can support a knight at d3) **23 ♖g1**

Simpler is 23 ♗xc5 ♘ed3 24 ♕xe8+ ♖xe8 25 ♘xd3 with equality, but Mieses – with a queen! – is playing for a win: in those times a positional queen sacrifice was something exotic...

23...c4 24 h4 (here 24 g5 ♗g7 25 ♖d1 would have maintained approximate equality) **24...♘d5**

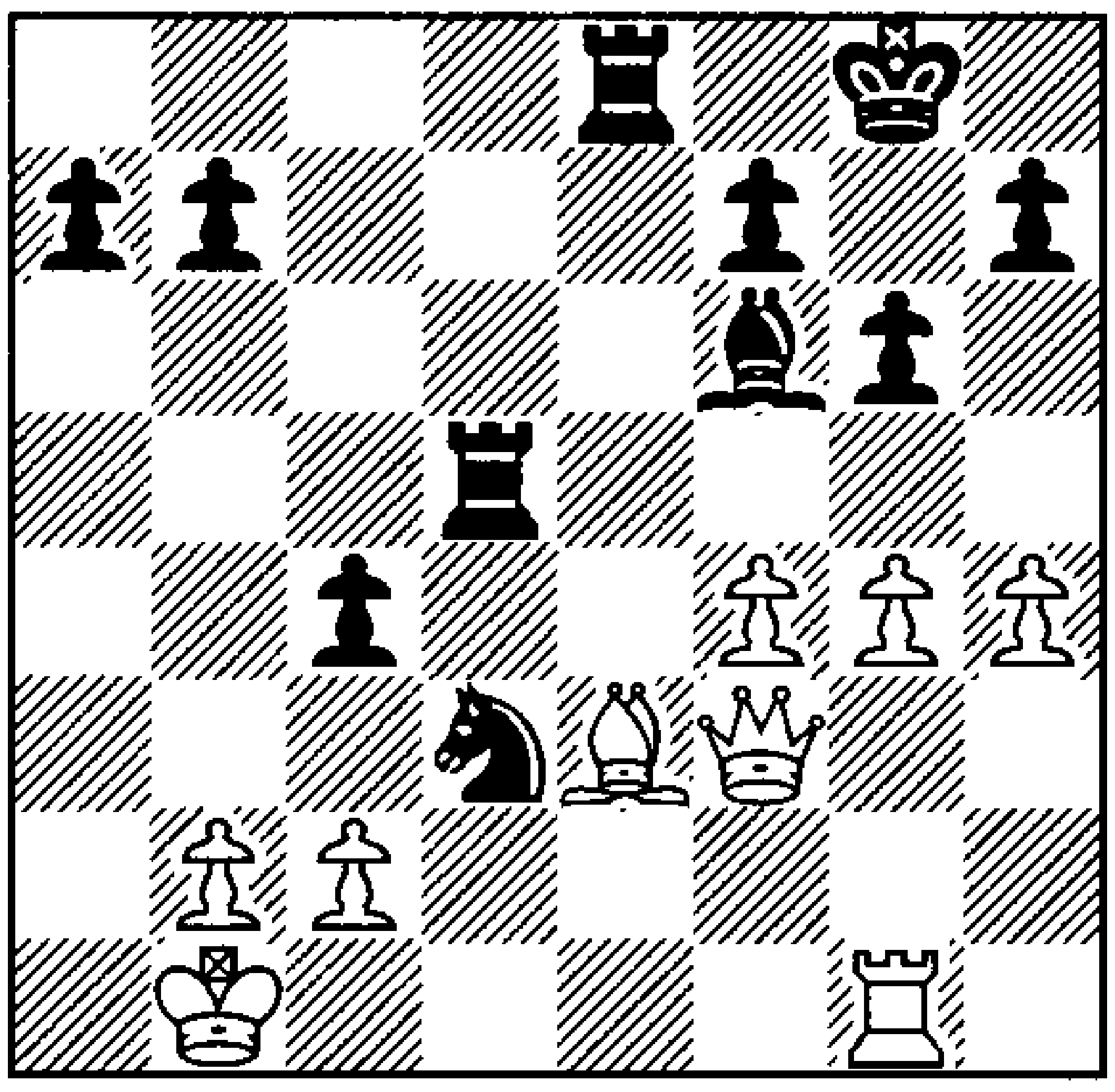
'The renewed complications resulting from this move required the most exact calculations.' (Alekhine)

25 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 26 f4?! (if 26 g5 ♗g7 27 ♖d1 Black was intending 27...♖b5! 28 ♗d4 ♖e6, although after the reply 29 ♕f1 with the idea of f2-f4 White has a solid position) **26...♘d3!**

Immediately exploiting the fact that the advance with f2-f4 has weakened the e3-bishop's defences.

27 ♕f3?

Alekhine considered it essential to play 27 cxd3 ♖xd3 28 ♖g3 ♗d4! 29 ♕c2 (but not 29 ♕xd3? cxd3 30 ♗xd4 ♖e1+ 31 ♔a2 d2! winning) 29...♗xe3 30 ♕xc4 ♖ed8 'with the better game.' Although after 31 f5 his advantage is not so obvious. 30...♖d4! 31 ♕b5 ♖e7 32 ♖f3 b6 would appear to be more accurate, with the idea of gradually invading with the rook into White's position.



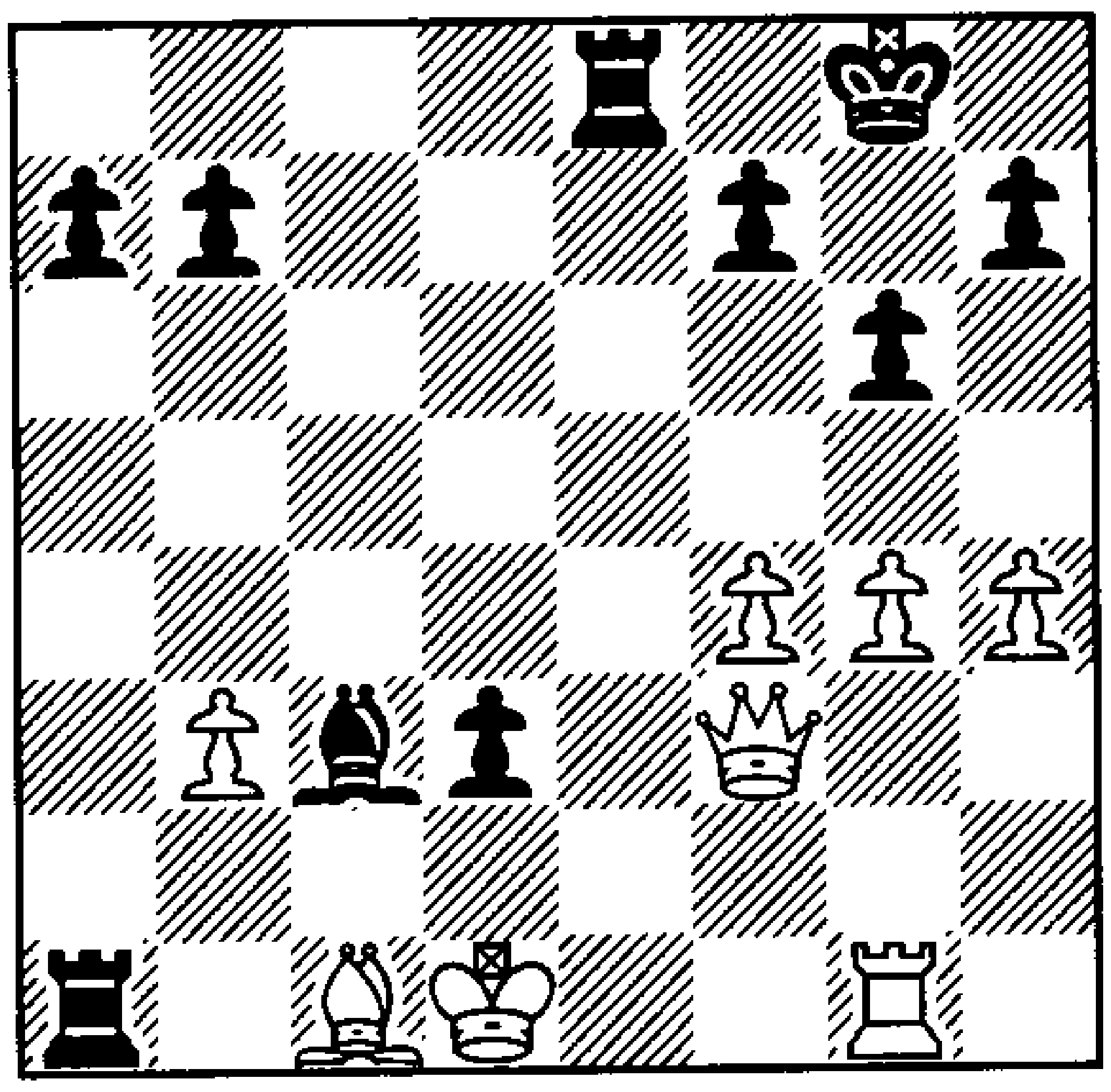
27...♖b5!

'Decisive! Although Black has only a rook for the queen, White is without resource.' (Alekhine)

28 cxd3

All the same the knight has to be taken. After 28 b3 ♖a5! 29 cxd3 in some early edition of Alekhine's best games the 'winning' variation 29...cxb3? 30 ♔c1? ♗c3 31 ♔d1 ♖a1+ was recommended, but grandmaster John Nunn, armed with the chess program Fritz, refuted it by 30 d4!

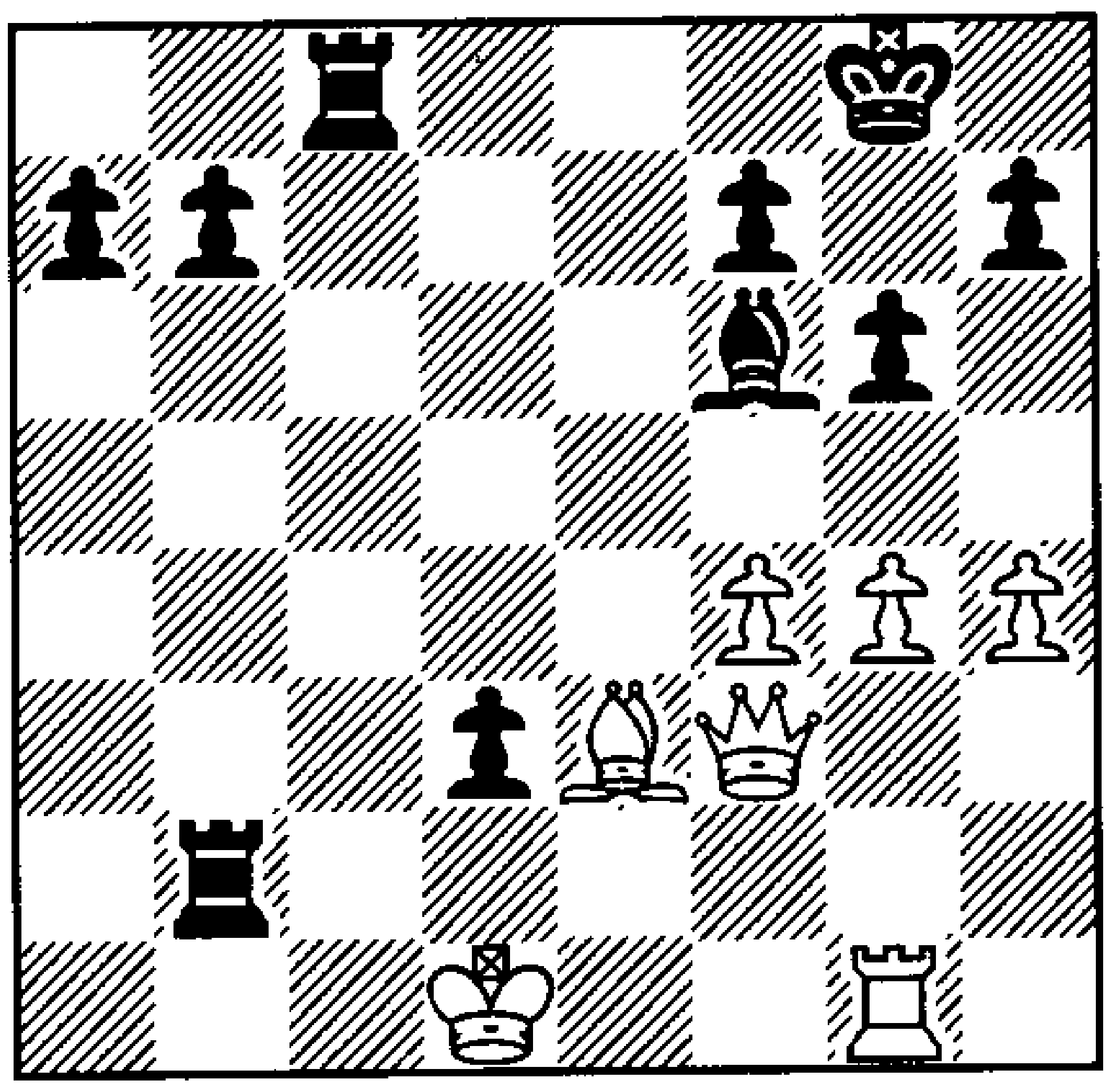
Of course, 29...cxd3! 30 ♔c1 ♗c3 31 ♔d1 ♖a1+ 32 ♗c1 is correct. Nunn showed me this position and invited me to find a pretty win for Black in four moves. The solving of this entertaining little problem took me half a minute...



Analysis diagram

32...♖e1+! 33 ♖xe1 ♖xc1+ 34 ♔xc1 d2+ 35 ♔c2 (35 ♔b1 dxe1♕+ and mate) 35...dxe1♘+!! A rare instance when the outcome is immediately decided by the promotion of a pawn to a knight!

28...♖xb2+ 29 ♔c1 cxd3 30 ♔d1 (30 ♖g2 ♖c8+ 31 ♔d1 would have merely transposed) **30...♖c8!**



31 g5

'Against the threat of 31...♖cc2 White's only defence was 31 ♖g2. In this case Black would have won as follows: 31...♖b1+ 32 ♔d2 ♖b3 33 ♔d1 (33 ♔e1 ♖c1+! 34 ♔f2 – or 34 ♗xc1 d2+ – 34...♗xh4+ and wins) 33...♗c3! 34 ♗c1 ♗b4! and White is helpless against the threats 35...d2 and 35...♖b1.' (Alekhine)

31...♖cc2! 32 ♔e1 ♖b1+ 33 ♕d1 ♗c3+ 0-1

The next all-Russian master tournament (St Petersburg 1913/14), a qualifying event for the historic international tournament, was a fateful event for Alekhine. All the best were playing, apart from the previous year's winners Rubinstein and Bernstein, who were already allowed into the 'high society'. The outcome of the battle for the sole qualifying place was as follows: 1-2. Alekhine and Nimzowitsch – 13½ out of 17; 3. Flamberg – 13; 4. Lowtzky – 11; 5. Levenfish – 10½; 6-7. Znosko-Borovsky and Smorodsky – 10; 8. Bogoljubow – 9½ etc. An additional mini-match between the winners ended in a draw (+1 -1), and both were allowed into the cherished 'tournament of champions' St Petersburg 1914.

Alekhine's performance in this event cannot be praised too highly! After winning in the preliminary tournament against the contender for the throne Rubinstein, and twice defeating Tarrasch in the final, he finished in third place behind the world champion Lasker and the newly-found contender Capablanca. 'The merit of the tournament,' wrote the Russian press, 'is that along with the two world stars it also provided a player for whom Russia is pleased most of all – Alekhine. In his person Russia has acquired a very powerful force, who without fear can embark on further, even more difficult and dangerous battles.' Alas, the most dangerous battles soon broke out beyond the chess board...

After successfully completing his course at the Law School that same spring, Alexander wondered about whether to play that summer in Mannheim, in the main tournament of the 19th Congress of the German Chess Union. 'He arrived literally two hours before the start of the first round,' recalled a participant in one of the subsidiary tournaments, Pyotr Romanovsky. 'To my question, why had he kept the tournament committee in a state of ignorance for so long, Alekhine replied that he needed to find out whether Capablanca would be playing in the tournament. 'I was prepared to play only in the event of Capablanca not participating,' he explained, and he frankly admitted that within a few years he was intending to play a match with Capablanca for the world championship, and therefore it was very important for him to create around this question a definite public opinion. 'At the moment I am a weaker player than Capablanca, and if he had participated in the tournament he would have taken first prize, and to finish below Capablanca now is not at all in my interests.' 'But the world champion is Lasker, not Capablanca,' I objected. 'But soon it will be Capablanca,' Alekhine replied.'

A profound strategic prediction! And five years later Alekhine stated that 'Lasker will be replaced by Capablanca – it is merely a question of time,' and that he had come to this conclusion after Capa's victory in San Sebastian 1911.

Incidentally, Lasker was guest of honour at the tournament in Mannheim and he made a speech at the opening ceremony. Naturally, Tarrasch also spoke, proposing a toast 'to the world brotherhood of chess.' Virtually 'Gens una sumus'...

In Mannheim the Russian grandmaster played brilliantly and after two-thirds of the distance he was confidently leading: 1. Alekhine – 9½ out of 11 (!); 2. Vidmar – 8½; 3. Spielmann – 8; 4-6. Breyer, Marshall and Réti – 7; 7. Janowski – 6½; 8-9. Bogoljubow and Tarrasch – 5½ etc. Here is a typical win by the young Alekhine, showing the way in which his style was taking shape. And, incidentally, his last game before the war.

Game 112

A.Alekhine-H.Fahrni

Mannheim 1914, 11th round
French Defence C13

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 e5 ♘fd7 6 h4!?

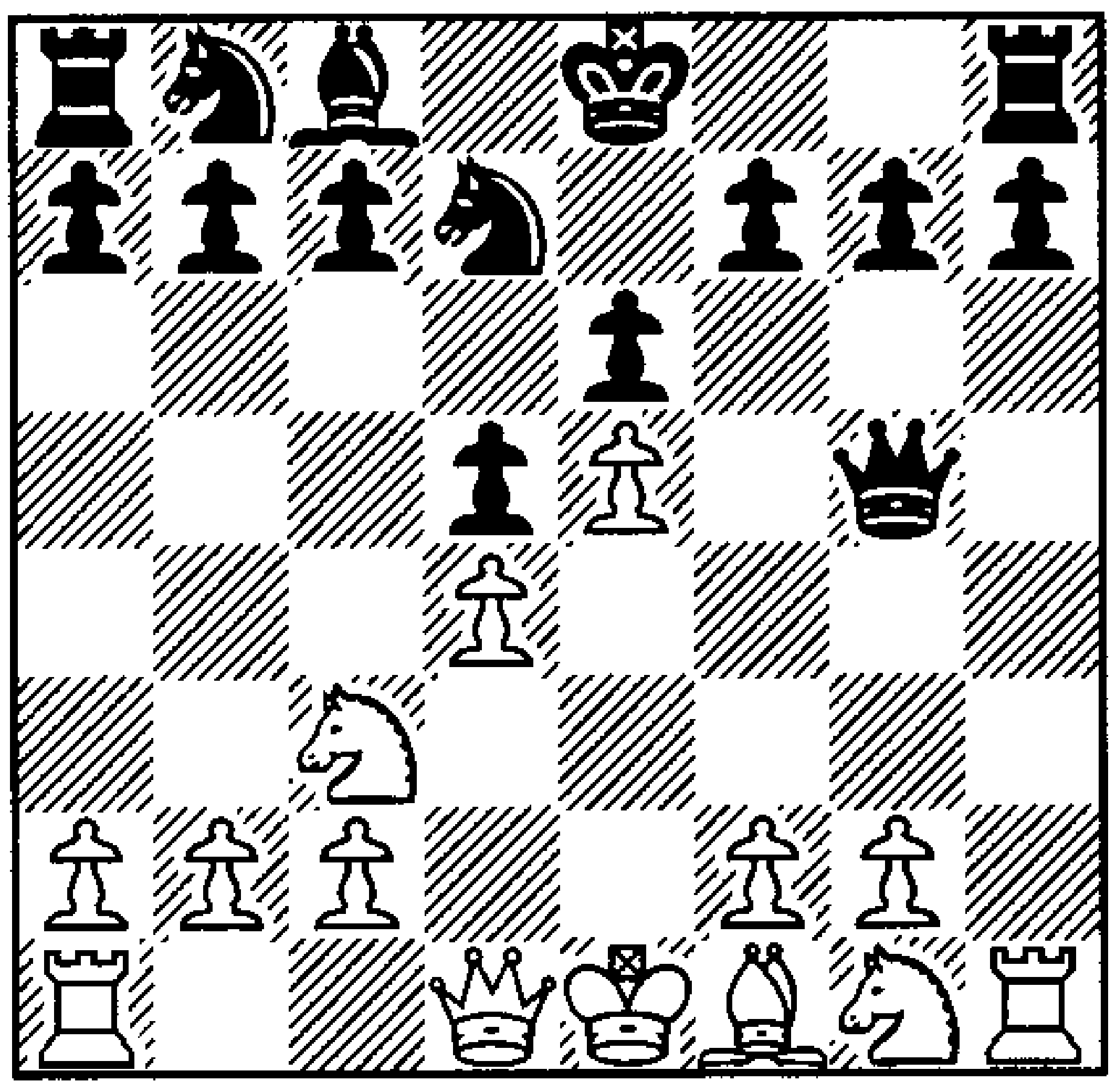
'This energetic move has been especially played in off-hand games by the ingenious French amateur Chatard and previously by the Viennese master Albin. It was during the present game that it was introduced for the first time in a Master Tournament.' (Alekhine) The classical 6 ♗xe7 is a quieter alternative (*Game No.50*).

6...♗xg5

Also possible is 6...0-0 7 ♗d3 f5! (but not 7...c5?! 8 ♘h3! ♖e8 9 ♘b5 f5 10 ♘d6 cxd4 11 ♘xe8 ♕xe8 12 ♗b5! winning Bogoljubow-Spielmann, Vienna 1922) 8 g4! c5 9 gxf5 cxd4 10 f6 ♗xf6!, or 6...a6 7 ♕g4 ♗xg5 8 hxg5 (Bogoljubow-Maróczy, San Remo 1930) 8...c5! 9 g6 f5!, with sharp play in both cases.

7 hxg5 ♕xg5

The *tabiya* of the Alekhine-Chatard Attack.



8 ♘h3

Earlier this was played almost automatically, but recently 8 ♕d3!? has also appeared – now 8...♘c6?! is weak on account of 9 ♘f3 ♕g6 10 ♕xg6 fxg6 11 ♘b5! ♔e7 (11...♔d8 12 ♘g5) 12 ♘xc7 ♖b8 13 ♘b5 with an obvious advantage (Kasparov-Korchnoi, Zürich rapidplay 2001).

8...♕e7

'After 8...♕h6?! Black's queen would be in a precarious position.' (Alekhine) After this theory recommends 9 ♘b5! ♘a6 10 f4 or 9 g3 c6 10 ♗d3 g6 11 f4 followed by ♕e2 and 0-0-0 (Ryumin-Makogonov, 9th USSR Championship, Moscow 1934).

9 ♘f4 ♘f8?

Too unwieldy. Later more successful plans were tried:

1) 9...a6 10 ♕g4 g6 11 0-0-0 ♘b6 (11...c5?! 12 ♕g3! ♘b6 – 12...cxd4 13 ♘cxd5! – 13 dxc5 ♕xc5 14 ♗d3 ♕f8 15 ♗e4!! dxe4 16 ♘xe4 ♘8d7 17 ♕c3! wins, Bogoljubow-Spielmann, Stockholm 1919) 12 ♗d3 ♘8d7 13 ♖h6 ♘f8 14 ♖dh1 ♗d7 with a solid position, although White has compensation for the pawn;

2) 9...♘c6 10 ♕g4!? (if 10 ♕d2, then 10...b6 or 10...♘b6 11 ♘h5 f5!? is possible) 10...♘xd4 11 0-0-0 ♘f5 12 ♘cxd5 (the start of wild complications) 12...exd5 13 ♘xd5 ♕xe5 14 ♗b5 0-0 15 ♗xd7 ♘h6 16 ♕g3 ♕xg3 17 ♘e7+ ♔h8 18 fxg3 ♗xd7 19 ♖xd7 ♘g4 20 ♖xc7 b5 21 ♖h4 ♘f6 22 ♘f5 a6 23 a4 ½-½ (Khalifman-Gulko, Reykjavik 1991).

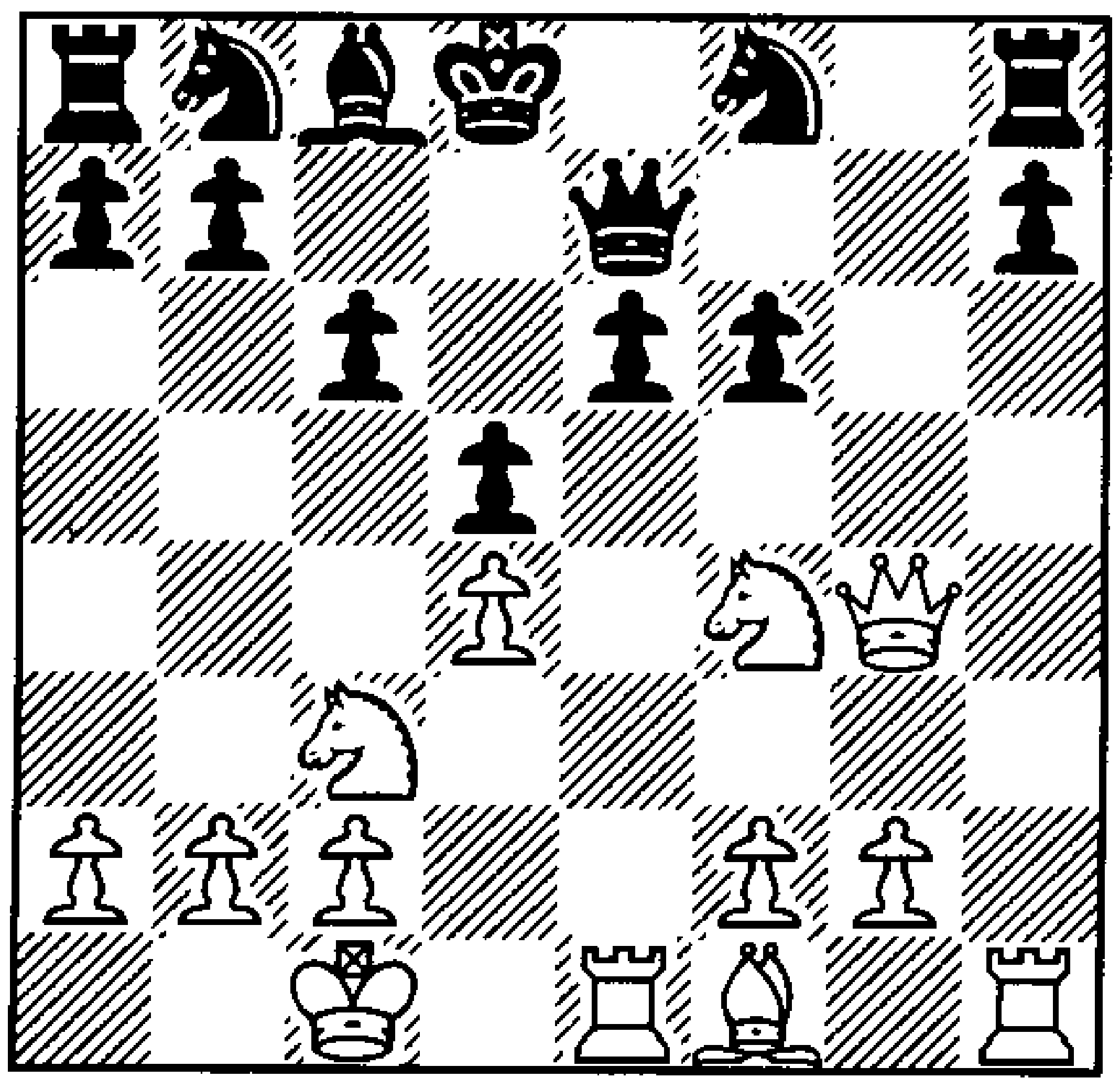
10 ♕g4 (with a double threat of 11 ♕xg7 and 11 ♘cxd5)

10...f5 11 exf6 gxf6 12 0-0-0

Renewing the threat of ♘cxd5. There is now no doubt that White has a dangerous attack.

12...c6 13 ♖e1! ♔d8

The computer makes roughly the same moves. 'There is no other way to develop the queenside. If 13...♗d7 the sacrifice of the knight at d5 would once more be decisive.' (Alekhine)



14 ♖h6! e5 15 ♕h4 ♘bd7 16 ♗d3 (an ideal way of conducting the attack: one of the threats is 17 ♗f5) **16...e4**

Black should hardly have played this, although for the computer it is... the first move!

17 ♕g3 (again threatening ♘cxd5) **17...♕f7?**

Almost the decisive mistake. 'Black cannot play 17...♕d6, for after 18 ♗xe4! dxe4 19 ♖xe4! he would be defenceless against the threat 20 ♕g7!' (Alekhine) However, after 18...♖g8! 19 ♕h2 dxe4 the position is by no means as clear as in the game, although 20 ♖xe4! (20 ♘xe4 ♕xd4) 20...♖g7 21 ♘e6+ ♕xe6 22 ♖xe6 ♘xe6 23 d5 leaves White with an attack.

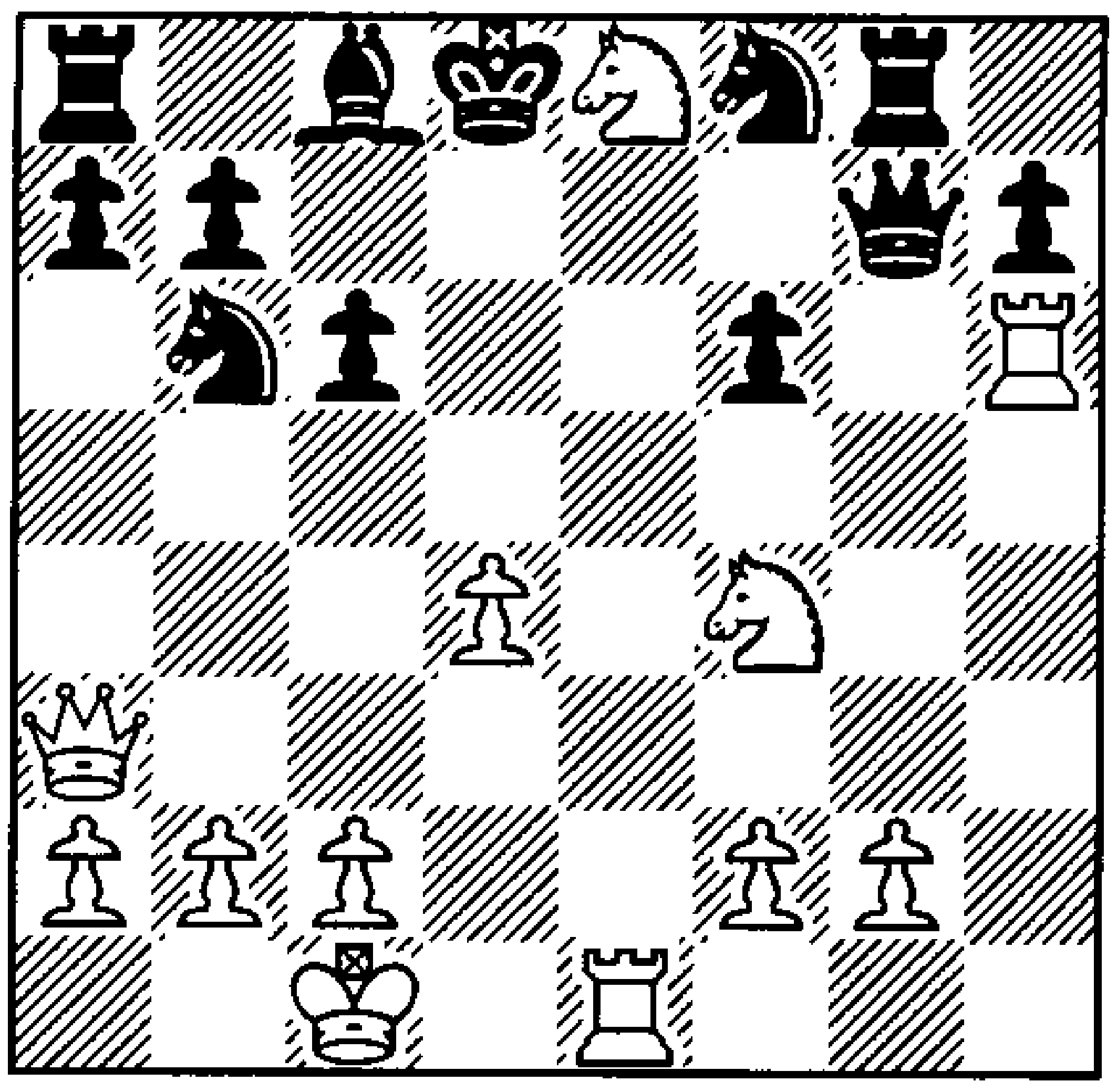
18 ♗xe4! dxe4? (18...♖g8! 19 ♗xd5 cxd5 20 ♕f3 etc. was nevertheless more tenacious) **19 ♘xe4 ♖g8**

Now this is too late. 'If 19...♕xa2 20 ♘xf6! ♘xf6 21 ♕g7! and wins.' (Alekhine) For example: 21...♕a1+ 22 ♔d2 ♕a5+ 23 c3 ♘6d7 24 ♕e7+ ♔c7 25 ♕d6+ ♔d8 (25...♔b6 26 ♘d5+) 26 ♖he6!.

20 ♕a3! (accuracy to the end; 20 ♘d6?! ♕xa2 is unclear) **20...♕g7**

Or 20...♕e7 21 ♕a5+ b6 22 ♕c3 winning.

21 ♘d6! ♘b6 22 ♘e8!



22...♕f7 (22...♕d7 23 ♘xf6; 22...♘c4 23 ♕c5 ♕f7 24 ♖xf6) **23 ♕d6+ 1-0**

23...♕d7 24 ♕xf6+ and mate. A clear, clean attack!

To enormous regret, on 1st August the First World War began. The tournament was cut short, and the organisers hastily distributed the prize fund in accordance with the placing of the participants at that moment...

In the Whirlwind of Wars and Revolutions

The First World War abruptly changed Alekhine's hitherto successful life. The misadventures of Russian chess players, and there were more than a dozen of them in Mannheim, began immediately after the cessation of the tournament, when they were all taken to a police station. Most were ordered not to travel and to wait until further notice, but Alexander was detained: because of a photograph that had been taken with him wearing the uniform of the Law School, he was taken for an officer. According to a witness, 'this misunderstanding cost Alekhine a night, spent in the barracks.'

Germany was instantly enveloped by a mass spy-mania and the Russians felt most uncomfortable. Three days later 'as a special exception' they were allowed to travel to Baden-Baden, to settle there in private quarters and to await further orders. But on the train the conductor played a cruel trick on them: he told them that they had to change in Rastadt, and he himself telephoned the military commandant of that town (a mobilisation centre in Southern Germany) and informed him of a suspicious group of foreigners...

'As soon as we stepped out of the carriage,' recalls Fedor Bohatirchuk, a participant in one of the subsidiary tournaments, 'we were surrounded by virtually a company of fully armed soldiers, and we were arrested. In the station building they thoroughly searched us and our luggage and triumphantly discovered score sheets with the recordings of chess games, taken by the zealous spy-hunters to be obviously code for the transmission of spy messages. The hour was late and, before any verdict was reached, we were taken to a military prison – we were lined up, each was forced to carry his own luggage, and surrounded by a cordon of soldiers, we set off... The population of the small town, on learning that some spies had been caught, poured out onto the street along which we were being led, and expressed their anger in every way possible. The most bellicose demanded immediate retribution on the spot, others broke through the cordon and expressed their feelings with their fists. Poor Selezniev could hardly drag a large basket with warm clothes, provided by his compassionate mother, and this not only delayed us, but also increased the number of blows we received. They also struck Alekhine, who stood out with his bearing and height.'

The military authorities quickly sorted out who was whom, but, to save face they continued their 'investigations' and put the chess players in a civil prison. There Alekhine shared a cell with Bogoljubow, Ilya Rabinovich and Samuil Vainstein. 'Life in prison was rather monotonous,' he later recalled. 'There were no books, no newspapers and, of course, no chessboard. Bogoljubow and I played blindfold chess for hours. Our battles were interrupted when for four days I was placed in solitary confinement, for the reason that during a communal walk (in the obligatory goose-step) I once ventured to smile...' More precisely, Alekhine exchanged glances with the pretty daughter of the warder, and the latter did not like this...

Within a couple of weeks the prisoners were finally sent to Baden-Baden, where a further two weeks later they had to pass through a military medical commission, in order to establish which of them were potentially dangerous to Germany. Only three were lucky, as being deemed unfit for military service: on 14th September they released Alekhine, and three days later – Saburov and Bohatirchuk. 'I did not believe my eyes, on seeing the conclusion of the commission, by which I was sent "for treatment" to Switzerland,' writes Bohatirchuk. 'Saburov was elderly and not in very good health, but why they freed the healthy Alekhine, I cannot imagine. I can only think that the doctor who examined him was an admirer of Alekhine's chess genius. I should mention that among those not released were Bogoljubow and Selezniev, who had both been released from military service in Russia.' Together with the remaining players they were interned in Triberg, and this changed Bogoljubow's fate: he married the daughter of a local school teacher and although he visited his motherland in 1924-26, in the end he became a German citizen.

But Alekhine left for Switzerland, and from there to Genoa – this Italian port had become a collecting point for Russians who were stuck in Europe. In the press a fantastic rumour appeared, to the effect that 'the winner of the tournament in Mannheim was intending to travel to Buenos Aires and to play numerous games there with Capablanca.' In fact Alekhine played numerous games (several hundred!) with Bohatirchuk, who also sat in Genoa for about a month, waiting for a boat. The latter later recalled:

'There was no question of being bored: I had a partner, and what a partner – Alekhine! Only someone who has played this chess genius knows what a magician he was on the 64 squares of the chessboard. In his hands the pieces were transformed into living creatures, making moves that were completely unexpected to his opponents. Moreover, these surprises would strike the enemy like a bolt from the blue in any stage of the game, even when there were very few pieces remaining. The enforced stay in Genoa undoubtedly did more for my chess development than the games in subsequent years with ordinary opponents.'

In mid-October Alekhine finally left for his motherland by a northern route: via Gibraltar, London, Stockholm (where he found time to give a simultaneous display on 24 boards) and Finland – to St Petersburg, which had now been renamed Petrograd, and then to Moscow. From November 1914 he was already playing numerous consultation games and giving charitable simultaneous displays, which included some for the benefit of Romanovsky and other chess-playing colleagues who were still imprisoned in Triberg.

Relating to this period is one of the mysteries of chess history, a legendary game, either in fact played, or thought up by the future world champion. But in any case it is a wonderful demonstration of Alekhine's impetuous, boundless imagination.

Game 113

A.Alekhine-N.N.

Moscow 1915

French Defence C12

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♗b4

The sharp McCutcheon counterattack, which Alekhine was much happier playing as Black.

5 e5

The popular reply to 5 exd5 is the 'French' 5...♕xd5!? (5...exd5 is not so good as in the variation 3...♗b4 4 exd5 exd5 5 ♗d3 ♘c6 6 ♘e2 ♘ge7 7 0-0 ♗f5 equalising, Capablanca-Alekhine, Buenos Aires 1st matchgame 1927) 6 ♗xf6 ♗xc3+ 7 bxc3 gxf6 8 ♕d2! (8 ♘f3 b6 is equal, Tarrasch-Alekhine, St Petersburg 1914) 8...♕a5! (8...c5 9 ♕e3!, 8...♗d7 9 c4! or 8...♘d7 9 c4! ♕e4+ 10 ♘e2 Capablanca-Alekhine, New York 1924) followed by ...♗d7-c6, ...♘d7 and ...0-0-0 (the fashion of the 1990s).

5...h6 6 exf6

'Chigorin's interesting continuation. Nowadays players prefer to aim at a rapid kingside attack by 6 ♗d2! ♗xc3 7 bxc3 ♘e4 8 ♕g4.' (Alekhine) This, the main line, extends from the ancient game Lasker-Marshall, (USA 4th matchgame 1907) to the classic duel Fischer-Rossolimo (USA Championship 1965/66) and to the present day.

6...hxg5 7 fxg7 ♖g8 8 h4 gxh4 9 ♕g4!?

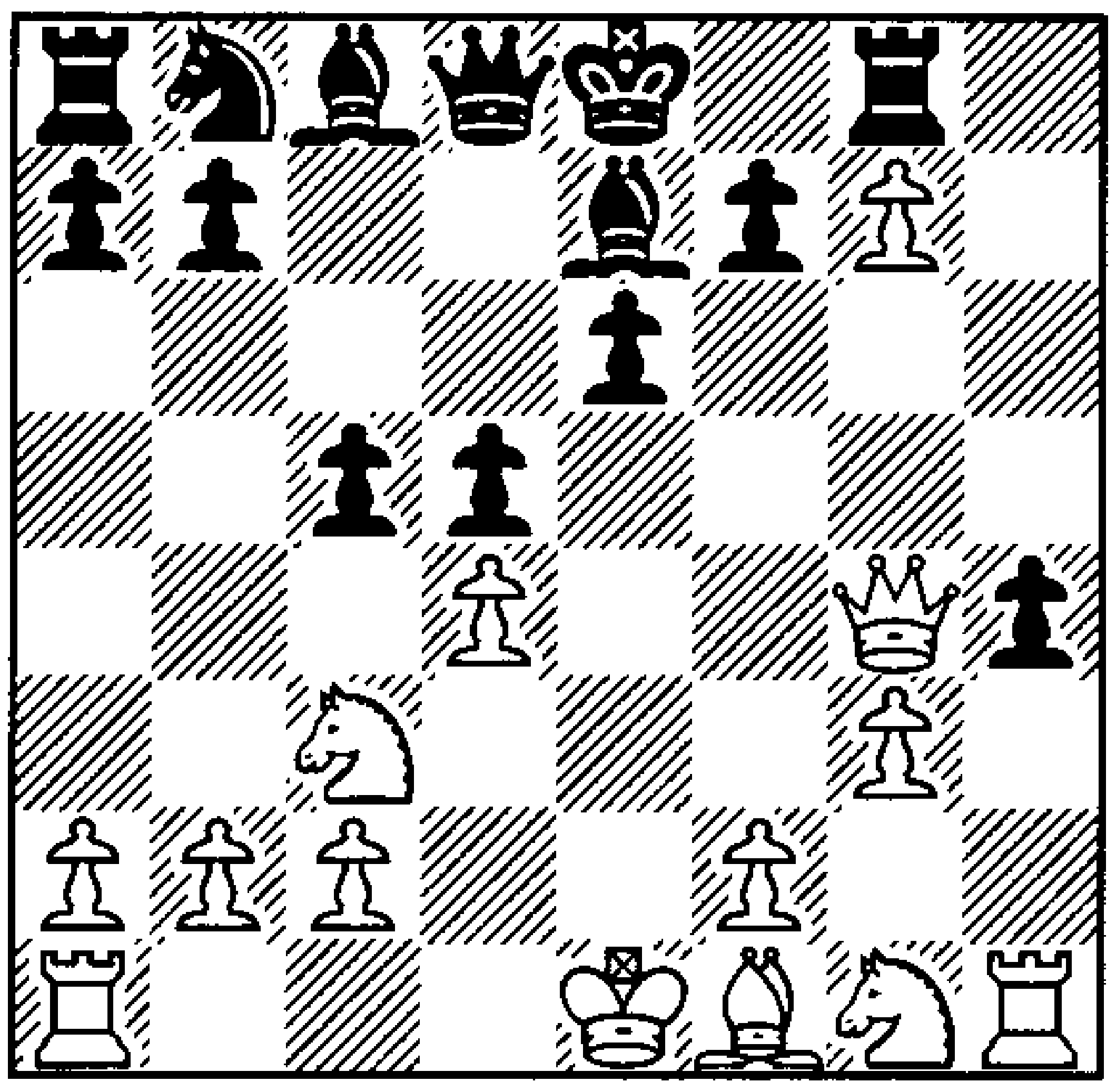
An attempt to improve on the variation 9 ♕h5 ♕f6 10 ♘f3 (10 ♕xh4 ♕xg7) 10...♘c6! 11 ♖xh4 ♕xg7 12 0-0-0 ♗d7 and 13...0-0-0 with equality.

9...♗e7

'The only correct reply. After 9...♕f6 10 ♖xh4 ♕xg7 11 ♕xg7 ♖xg7 12 ♖h8+ ♔d7 13 ♘f3 White has the better chances.' (Alekhine) Excuse me, but after 12...♗f8! 13 0-0-0 (13 ♘b5 ♘a6 14 ♘f3 f6 15 ♘h4 ♘b4!) 13...♗d7 Black completes his development and easily equalises (Heuer-Dvoretsky, Tallinn 1976).

10 g3! (threatening to create another passed pawn) **10...c5**

Of course, not 10...hxg3? on account of 11 ♖h8. Also in White's favour is 10...♗f6 11 gxh4 ♖xg7 12 ♕f4!



11 gxh4

The start of the legend. The well-known game Grigoriev-Alekhine (Moscow 1915/16) went 11 0-0-0 ♘c6 12 dxc5 ♕a5! 13 ♔b1 e5? (13...♗f6 14 ♘b5 ♔e7! and ...♖xg7 would have given Black the better chances) 14 ♕h5 ♗e6 15 ♘xd5? (correct was 15 ♗h3! ♗xh3 16 ♘xh3 d4 17 ♘d5 with advantage) 15...♗xd5 16 ♖xd5 ♘b4! and Black won by a direct attack on the king.

Annotating the game with Grigoriev in the magazine *Shakhmatny Vestnik* (1916), Alekhine writes: 'If 11 gxh4 I was intending to play 11...♗f6, since 11...cxd4 leads to complications that are very hard to calculate. Here, for example, is one of the possible fantastic variations.' And he goes on to give all the moves of the game with N.N., right up to 24 ♖h6!!

But in his book of best games (1927) Alekhine writes: 'A game played by the author in Moscow, 1915, continued as follows...' – and he gives the same moves, accompanying them with a light commentary.

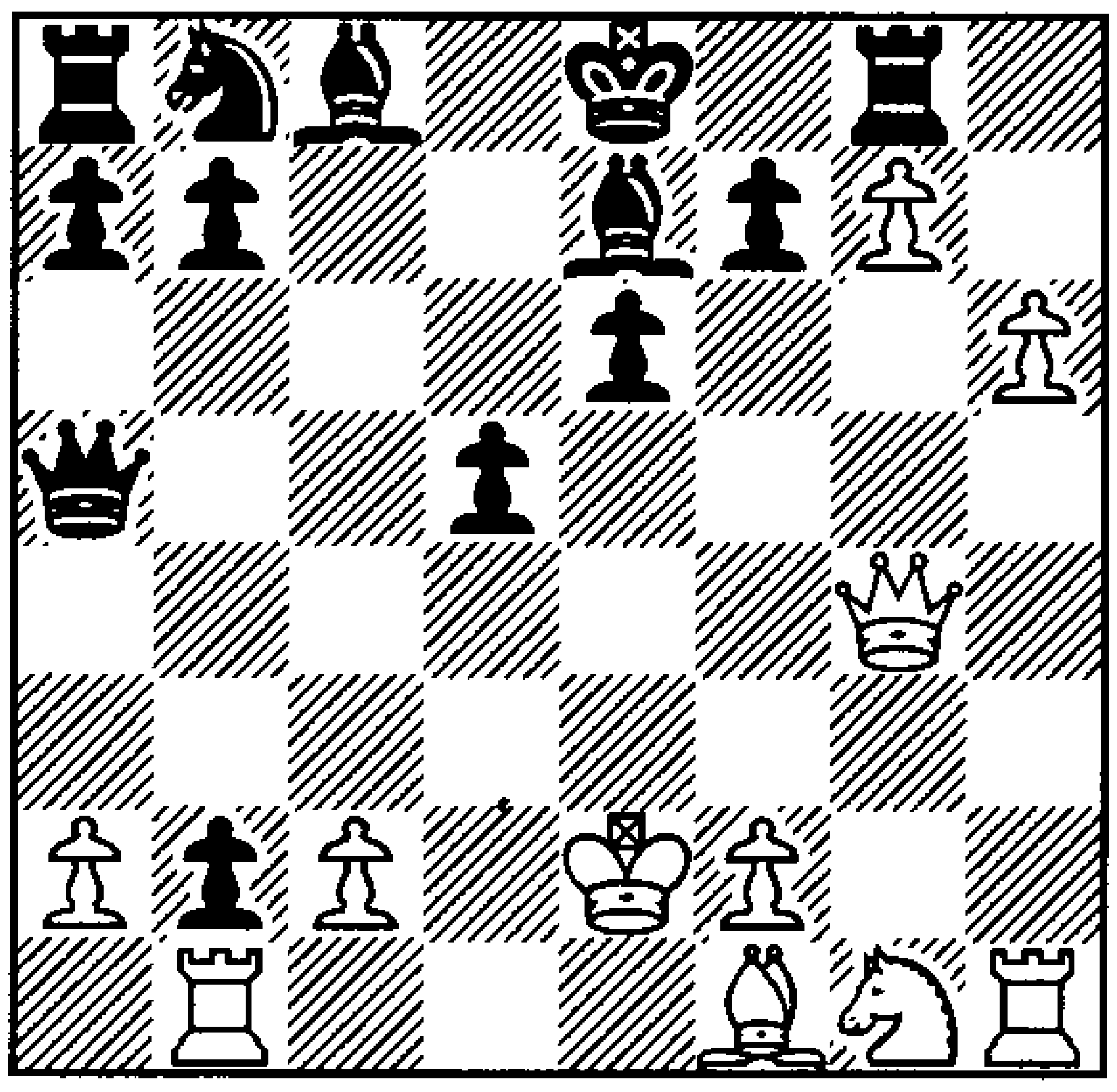
In any case, we have the happy opportunity of enjoying the fairy-tale final position.

11...cxd4

11...♗f6!? was indeed more prudent. However, as we will see, things are by no means so bad for Black.

12 h5! dxc3 13 h6 cxb2 14 ♖b1 ♕a5+ 15 ♔e2

An important moment, which up till now has been skipped over by all the analysts. But not the computer!



15...♕xa2?

In my opinion, 15...♗f8!! would have destroyed White's entire set-up. For example: 16 h7 ♖xg7 17 ♕d4 ♖xh7 18 ♖xh7 ♕xa2 19 ♖xb2 ♕a6+ 20 ♔e1 ♕a1+ 21 ♔e2 ♘d7 22 ♘f3 b6 with three pawns for the exchange, or 16 gxf8♕+ ♖xf8 17 ♖xb2 ♕c3 (17...♘c6!?), and here 18 ♕g7 d4! 19 ♕xf8+? ♔xf8 20 h7 d3+! 21 ♔d1 ♕h8 is bad for White, while after 18 ♕b4 ♕f6! 19 ♔e1 ♖h8 Black retains his extra material and winning chances.

16 h7 ♕xb1 17 hxg8♕+ ♔d7 18 ♕xf7 ♕xc2+ 19 ♔f3 ♘c6!

'Only in this way can Black combat the veritable brigade of White queens. The knight move enables him to simultaneously defend both bishops.' (Kotov)

20 ♕gxe6+

Another important refinement: In my

view, 20 g8♕! is much simpler, for example: 21...♘e5+ 21 ♔g2 ♘xf7 22 ♕xf7 ♔c6 23 ♕e8+ ♔b6 24 ♕d4+ with a forced win, or 20...♕e4+ 21 ♕xe4 dxe4+ 22 ♔g2 b1♕ 23 ♕xe6+ ♔c7 24 ♕g3+ ♔b6 25 ♕d5 also with a decisive advantage.

20...♔c7 21 ♕f4+ ♔b6 22 ♕ee3+ ♗c5

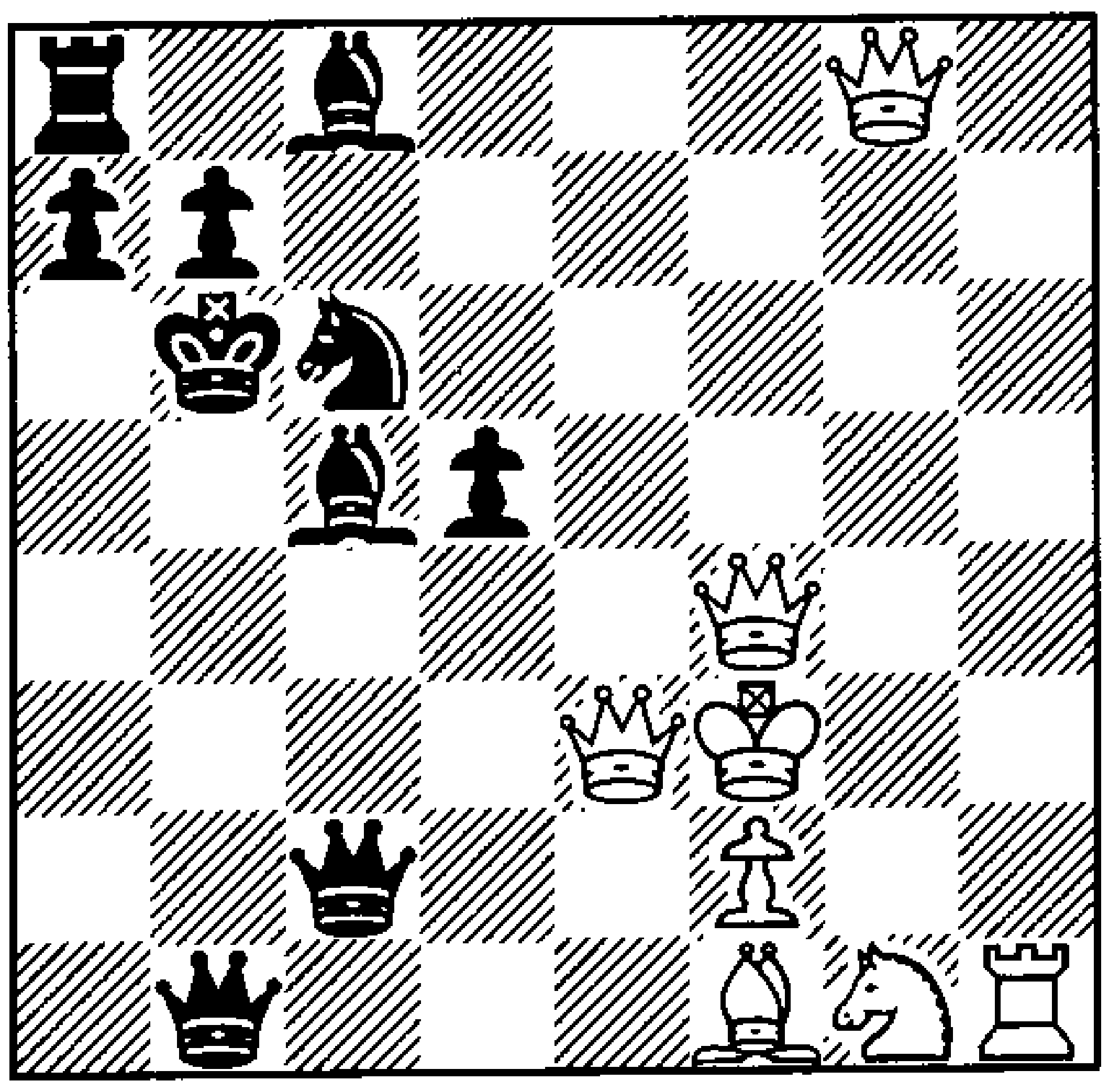
'Other moves lose immediately: 22...d4 23 ♗d3! or 22...♔a5 23 ♕d2+.' (Kotov)

23 g8♕!

After 23 ♗d3 ♗xe3 24 ♕xe3+?! (24 ♗xc2 ♗xf4 25 g8♕ is evidently better) 24...d4 25 ♗xc2 dxe3 26 g8♕ (26 ♖h8? ♘d4+) 26...♗g4+! 27 ♕xg4 ♘e5+ 28 ♔g3 ♘xg4 29 ♔xg4 ♖h8! 30 ♘h3 ♖c8 White could have been left empty-handed.

23...b1♕

'In the event of 23...♗xe3 24 ♕xe3+ hopeless for Black are both 24...d4 25 ♕eb3+ and 24...♔c7 (24...♔a5 25 ♕xd5+) 25 ♕g3+!, when the two queens mate the black king without difficulty.' (Kotov)



Fantastic: there are five queens on the board! In the famous finish to the 11th game of the Capablanca-Alekhine match there were 'only' four (*Game No.125*).

'In this extraordinary position White won by a *coup de repos*: **24 ♖h6!!** (threatening 25 ♕d8 mate), for if 24...♗xe3?, then 25 ♕d8+ ♔c5 26 ♕fd6+ ♔d4 27 ♕8f6+ and mate. 24...♕xf1? is also not possible on account of 25 ♕b4+ ♔c7 (25...♕b5 26 ♕d8+ ♔a6 27 ♕ea3+ and mate in two moves) 26 ♕g3+ with mate in a few moves.' (Alekhine) Or 24...♕e4+ 25 ♕exe4 dxe4+ 26 ♔g3! ♕xf1 27 ♕b3+ with an attack and a material advantage.

The computer shows that Alekhine's move 24 ♖h6!! was indeed the strongest. But 60 years after the mythical game the best defence for Black was found by grandmaster Timman: 24...♗g4+! 25 ♕gxg4 ♗xe3 26 ♕b4+?! ♕xb4 27 ♕xb4+ ♔c7 and White has only perpetual check (28 ♕e7+ etc.). However, in my view, here too after 26 ♕xe3+! ♕c5 27 ♕gf4 he retains a considerable advantage.

It is hard to convey how difficult these wartime years must have been for Alekhine: there were the premature deaths of his parents (his father spent more than a year in a German prison) and work at the front as a Red Cross (according to another version, Union of Cities) official – rescuing the wounded under artillery fire, serious concussion, the military hospital in Tarnopol...

'For a whole month I lay immobile, bedridden,' Alekhine recalled. 'For me at that time playing blindfold was a real godsend. At my request I was often visited by local players, and I would give small simultaneous displays without looking at the board. It was in one such display that my best known blindfold game was played – against Feldt.' (Historians believe that this was the pseudonym of one of the Tarnopol medical staff.)

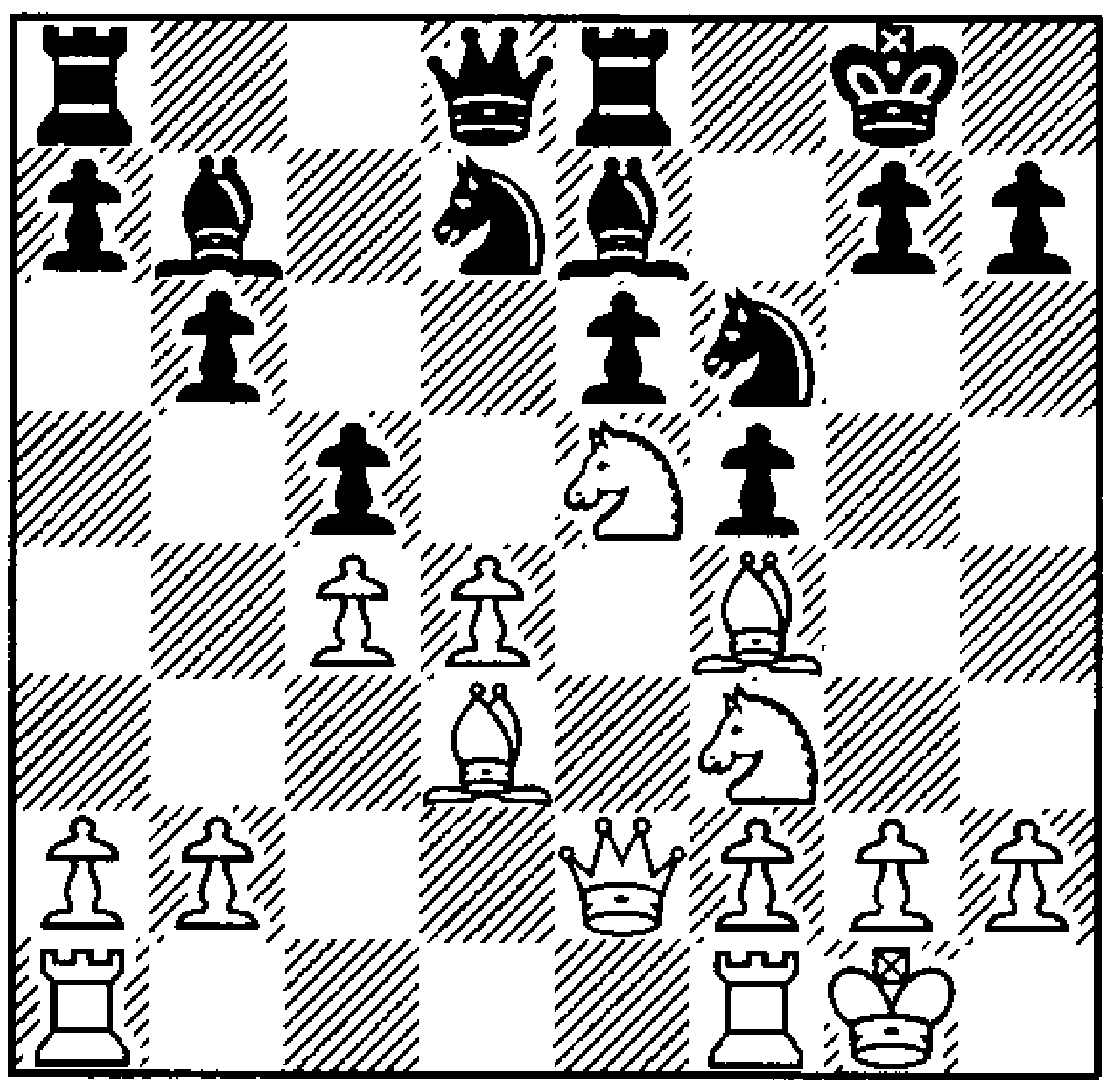
Game 114

A.Alekhine-M.Feldt

Blindfold simultaneous display,
Tarnopol 1916
French Defence C11

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 exd5 (4 ♗g5! – *Game No.113*) **4...♘xd5 5 ♘e4! f5? 6 ♘g5! ♗e7 7 ♘5f3 c6 8 ♘e5 0-0 9 ♘gf3 b6 10 ♗d3 ♗b7 11 0-0 ♖e8?!** (11...c5) **12 c4 ♘f6 13 ♗f4 ♘bd7 14 ♕e2 c5?**

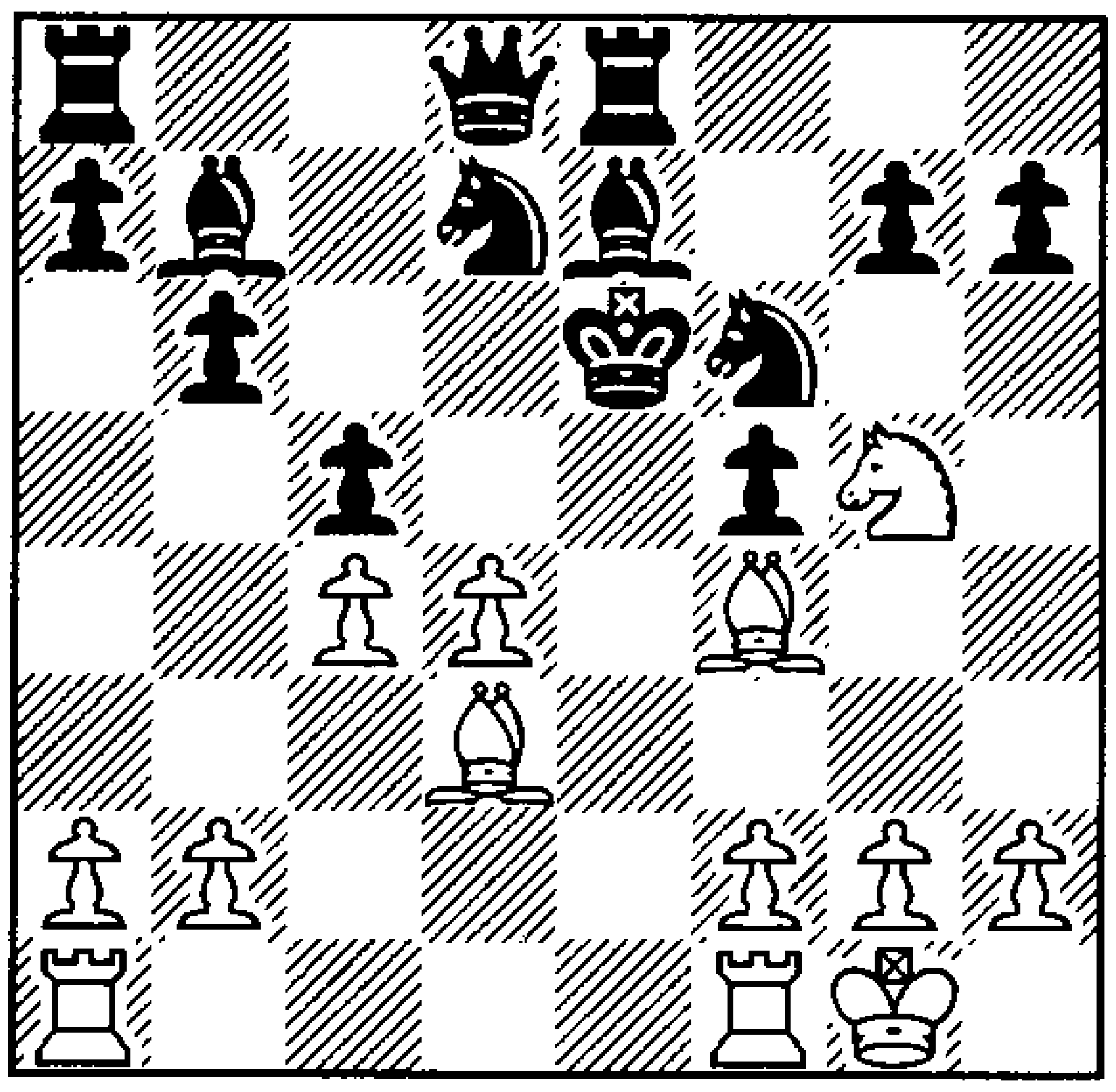
14...♘f8 or 14...♗f8 was essential, but who could have known...



15 ♘f7!! (there's a surprise!) **15...♔xf7**

After 15...♕c8 16 ♕xe6 the threat of 17 ♘h6+ ♔h8 18 ♕g8+! and ♘f7 mate wins.

16 ♕xe6+! ♔g6 (16...♔xe6 17 ♘g5 mate!



Analysis diagram

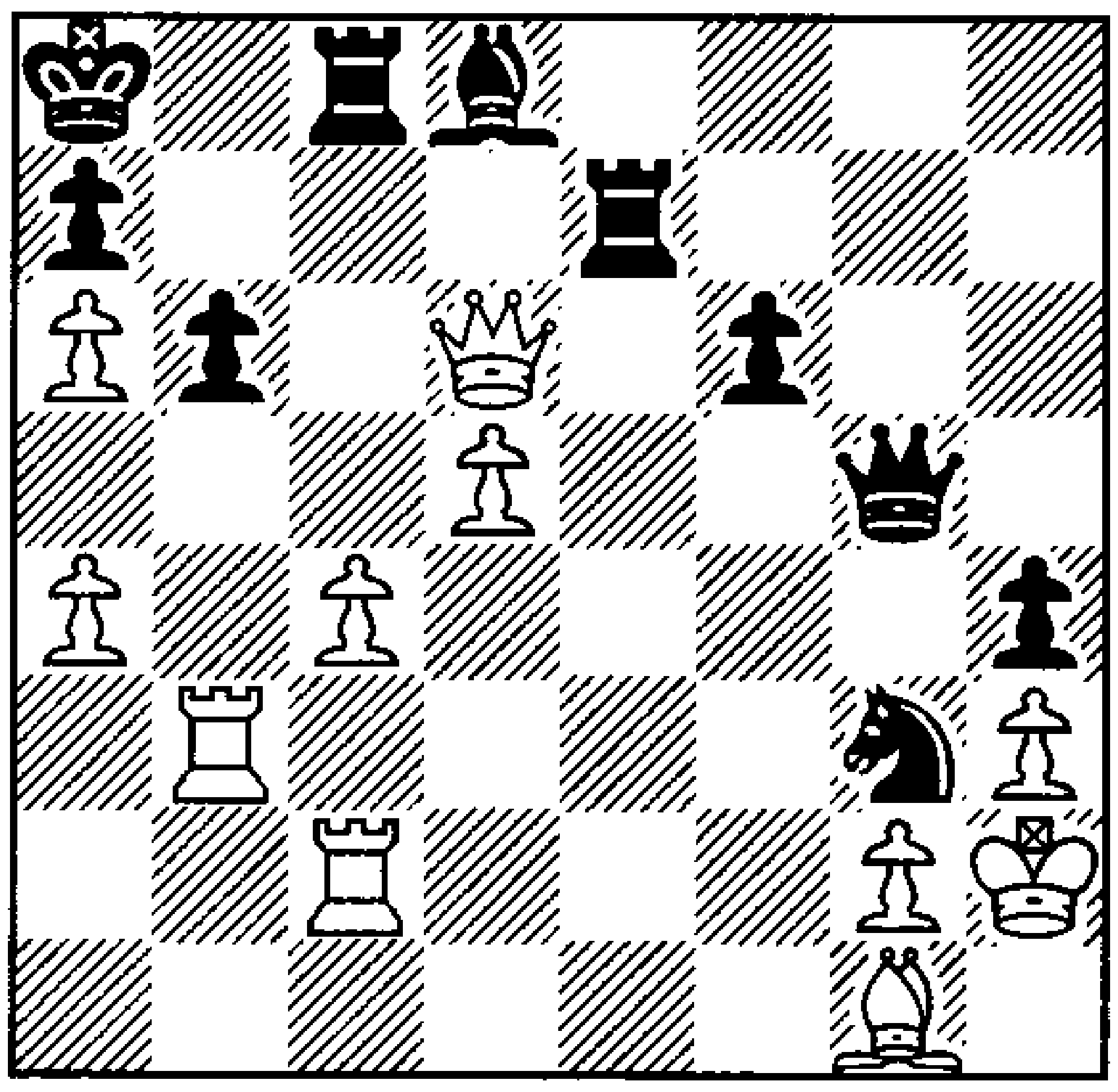
or 16...♔f8 17 ♘g5!) **17 g4! ♗e4 18 ♘h4 mate**

After leaving hospital, Alekhine returned to Moscow, where for his exploits at the front he was awarded the Order of St Stanislav and two George Medals.

Then came the ominous year 1917 – the year of tragic revolutionary shocks. Alekhine rushed about Russia from town to town, as though not knowing where to make for: he gave simultaneous displays, normal and blindfold, he played consultation and exhibition games...

The following finish is another vivid demonstration of his restless, explosive style of play. That same style and approach to chess, which later was incomprehensible to Fischer, with his classically clear, rational chess thinking.

Game 115
A.Alekhine-M.Hofmeister
Petrograd 1917



31 c5!

The only chance in an almost hopeless situation. Unfathomable complications now ensue.

31...b5?

The attempt to give perpetual check – 31...♘f1+? 32 ♔h1 ♘g3+ is refuted by 33 ♖xg3! ♕xg3 34 cxb6!, for example: 34...♖xc2 (34...♖ec7 35 ♖xc7; 34...♖b8 35 b7+) 35 ♕xd8+ ♕b8 36 ♕xe7 axb6 37 d6 winning, or 34...♕xd6 35 ♖xc8+ ♕b8 36 b7+ ♖xb7 37 axb7+ ♔xb7 38 ♖xb8+ ♔xb8 39 ♗f2 and matters are decided by the extra pawn.

However, as the computer confirms, Black had two ways to at least avoid being crushed:

1) 31...♘e4 32 cxb6! ♕xg2+! (found in the early 70s by some East German players) 33 ♖xg2 ♘xd6 34 b7+ (34 a5!? ♖d7 35 ♖gb2 ♖b8 36 ♗e3 axb6 37 axb6 ♗xb6 38 ♖xb6 ♖xb6 39 ♗xb6 ♘c4 with level chances) 34...♘xb7 35 axb7+ ♖xb7 36 ♖xb7 ♔xb7 37 ♖g7+ ♖c7 38 ♖xc7+ ♗xc7+ 39 ♔g2 ♗b6 40

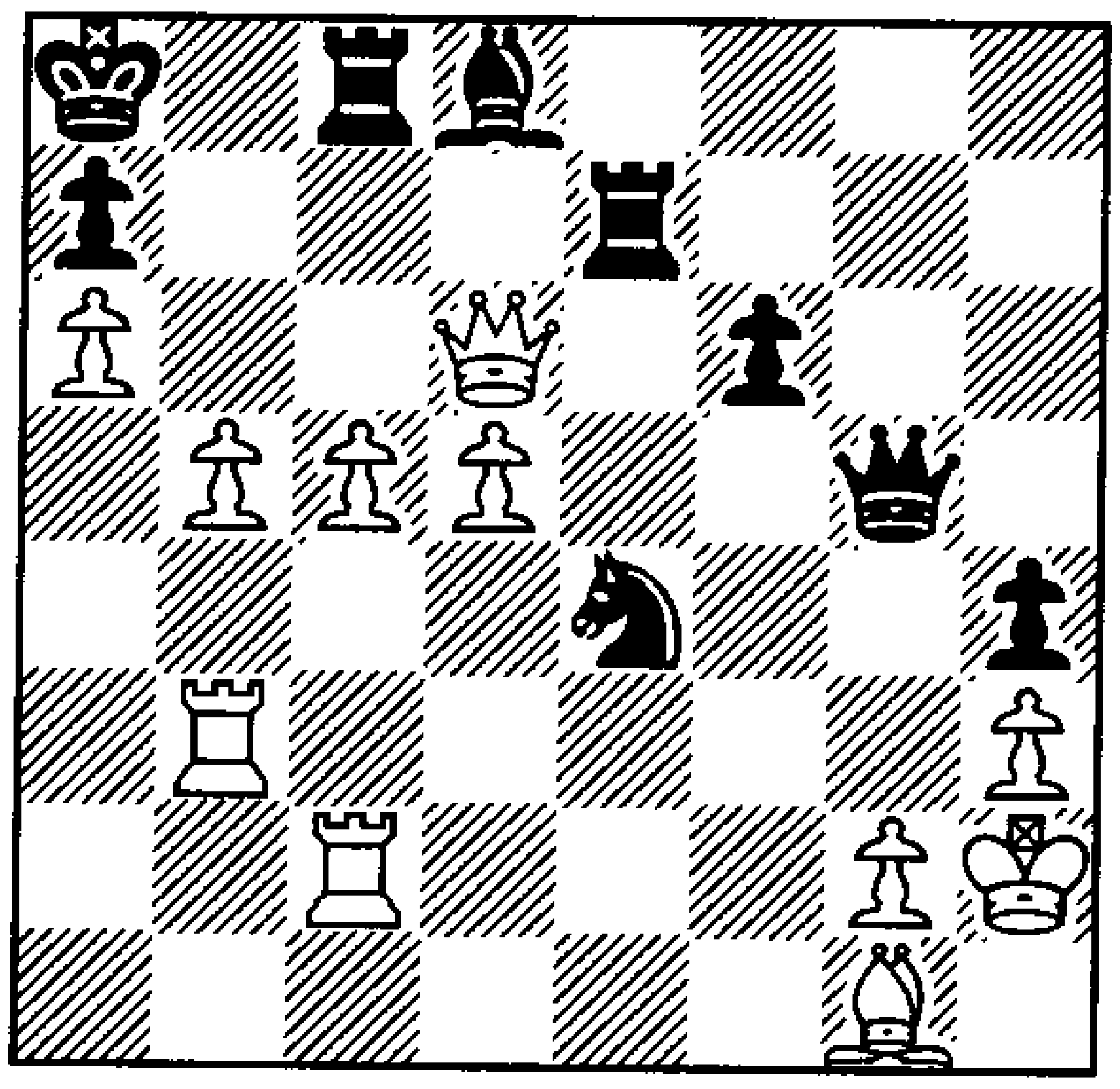
♗h2 ♔a6 41 ♔f3 ♔a5 42 ♔g4 ♔xa4 43 d6 a5 44 ♔f5 ♔b3, or 38 ♖g4!? ♖c2+ 39 ♔h1 ♗b6! 40 ♗xb6 ♔xb6 41 ♖xh4 ♔c5 42 ♖f4 ♖a2 43 d6 ♔xd6 44 ♖xf6+ ♔e5 45 ♖a6 ♔f4 with a draw in each instance;

2) 31...♖e2! (with the threat of ...♘f1+) 32 ♖xe2 ♘xe2 33 ♕d7 (33 cxb6 ♗xb6 wins for Black) 33...♕e5+ 34 ♔h1 ♕c7 35 ♕xc7 (inferior is 35 ♕e6? ♘g3+ 36 ♖xg3 hxg3 37 c6 ♔b8) 35...♖xc7! (stronger than 35...♗xc7 36 d6 ♗d8 and than 36...bxc5? 37 dxc7 ♘xg1?? 38 ♖d3!, although 37...♘g3+ 38 ♔h2 ♘f1+ still gives perpetual check) 36 c6 ♘g3+ 37 ♔h2 ♖c8 with an extra piece and winning prospects.

After missing these possibilities, Hofmeister perishes under the pawn avalanche.

32 axb5 ♘e4

Black loses picturesquely after 32...♘f1+ (32...♖e2 33 ♖xe2 ♘xe2 34 b6!) 33 ♔h1 ♘g3+ 34 ♖xg3 ♕xg3 35 b6! ♕xd6 (or 35...axb6 36 cxb6 ♕xd6 37 ♖xc8+ ♕b8 38 b7+ ♖xb7 39 axb7+ ♔xb7 40 ♖xb8+ ♔xb8 41 ♗c5) 36 cxd6 ♖xc2 37 dxe7 ♗xe7 38 b7+ ♔b8 39 ♗h2+ ♖c7 40 ♗f4! ♗c5 41 g3! hxg3 42 h4 ♗d4 43 ♗xc7+ ♔xc7 44 d6+ ♔b8 45 d7 ♗b6 46 h5 and wins.



33 b6!

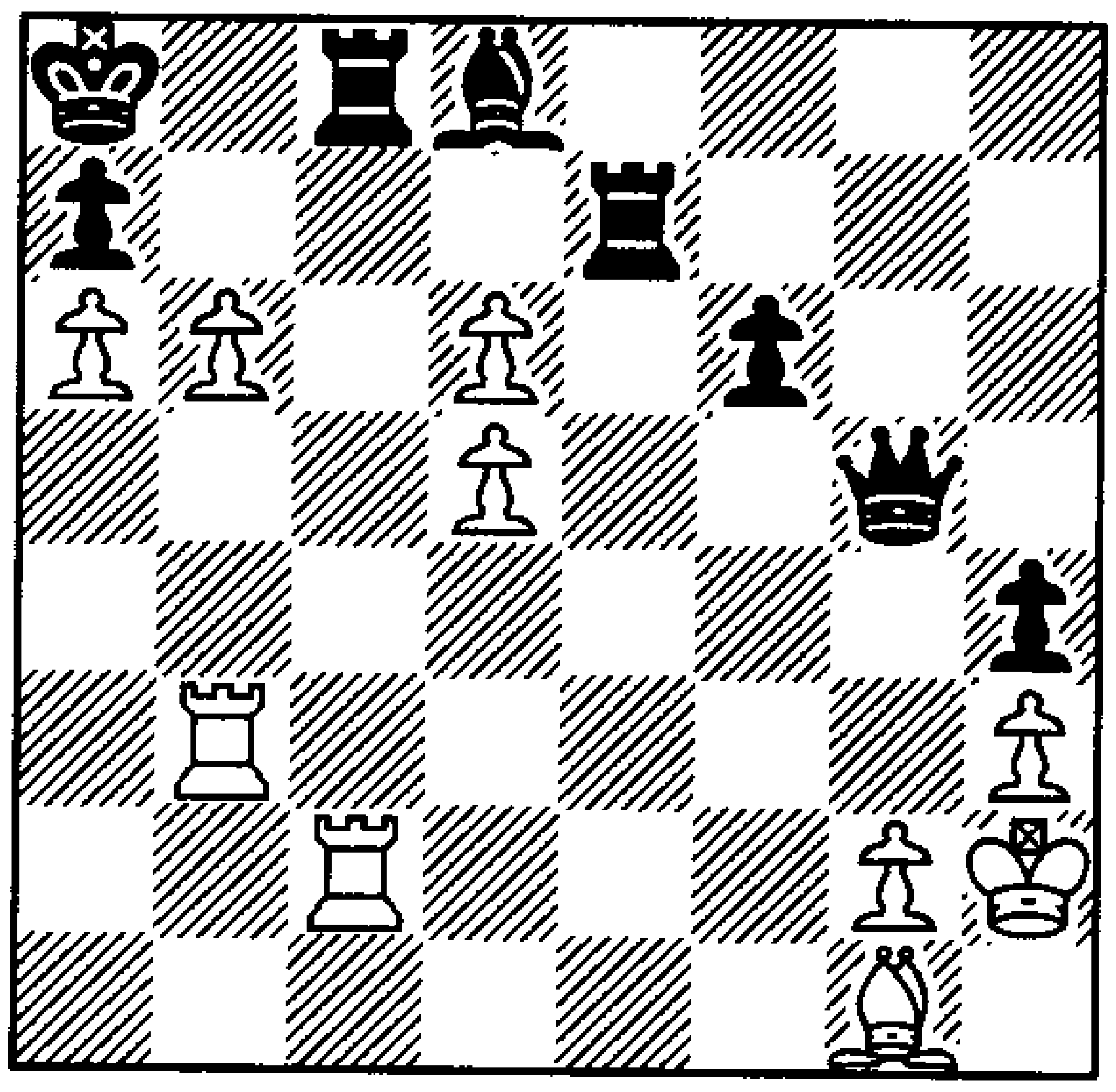
'The queen and the rooks don't matter! The outcome is decided by the white pawns.' (Kotov)

33...♘xd6

Also after the desperate 33...axb6 34 cxb6 ♕xg2+!? 35 ♖xg2 ♘xd6 36 b7+ ♘xb7 37 axb7+ ♖xb7 38 ♖a2+ ♔b8 39 ♗a7+ ♔a8 (39...♔c7 40 ♖c2+ ♔d6 41 ♖xc8 ♖xb3 42 ♖xd8+) 40 ♖ba3! White still wins.

34 cxd6

This is not something that one sees every day:



34...♖ec7

What else?! The white pawns are irresistible! In confirmation Alekhine gives the following variations:

1) 34...♖xc2 35 b7+ ♖xb7 36 axb7+ ♔b8 37 ♗xa7+ and mate follows in two more moves;

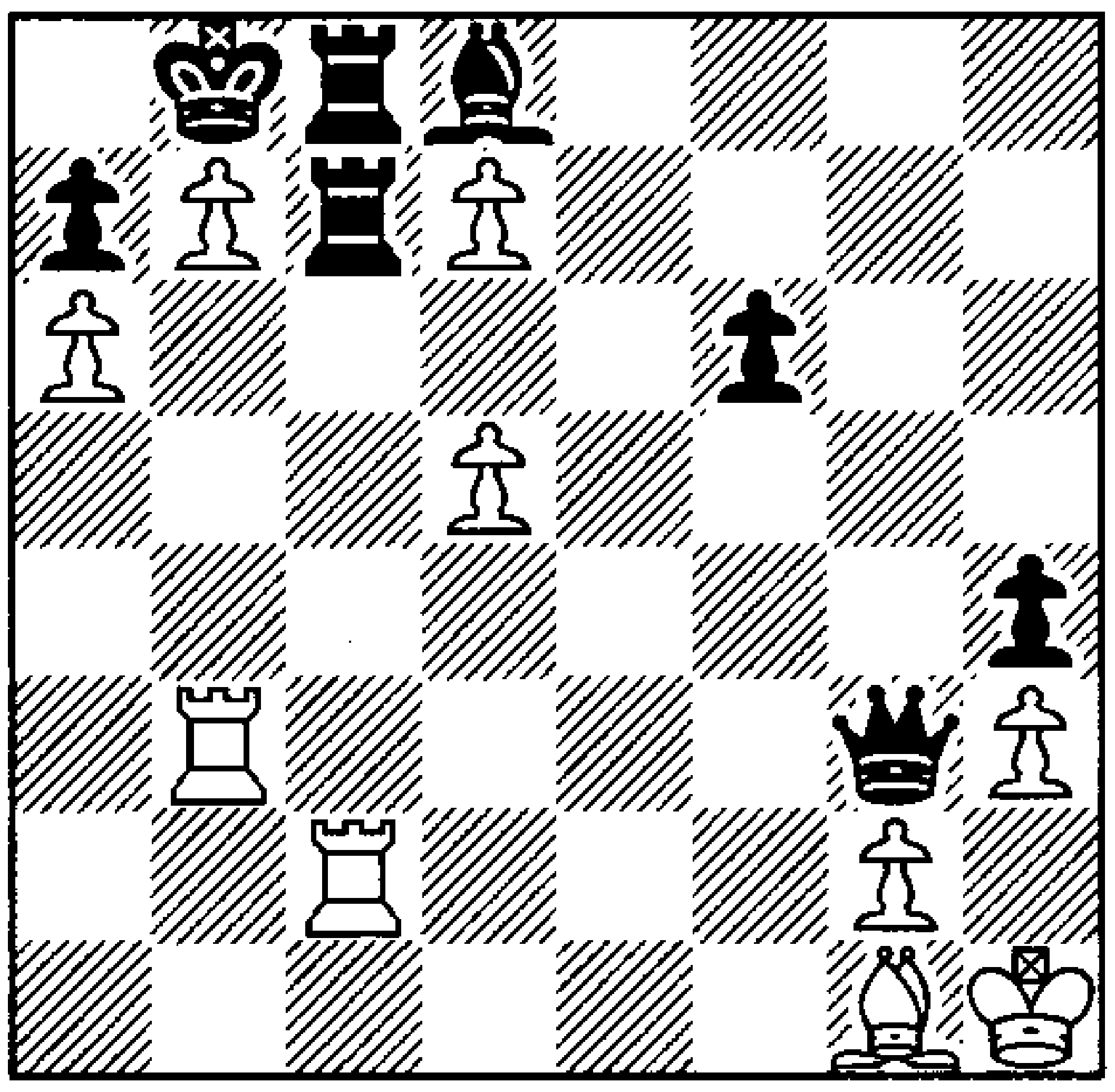
2) 34...♖b8 35 b7+ and mate in three moves;

3) 34...axb6 35 ♖xc8+ ♔a7 36 dxe7 and wins (36...♕f4+ 37 ♔h1 ♗xe7 38 ♗xb6+ ♔xa6 39 ♖a8+ ♔b7 40 ♗e3+ Kotov);

4) 34...♗c7! 35 b7+! ♔b8 36 dxc7+ ♖exc7 (36...♖cxc7? 37 ♗xa7+) 37 ♖xc7! etc. That is, 37...♕e5+ 38 ♔h1! ♕xc7 39 ♗h2, or 37...♖g8 38 ♖c2. I should like to add 36 ♔h1!? ♖ce8 37 dxe7 ♕xd5 38 ♖xc7 ♔xc7 39 b8♕+ ♖xb8 40 ♖xb8 winning.

35 b7+ ♔b8 36 d7!! ♕g3+ 37 ♔h1 1-0

'An incredible position. It represents the ultimate triumph of mind over matter – the two white pawns on d7 and b7 conquer the black army, which has in its ranks a whole queen more.' (Kotov) (The moves in this game have been numbered arbitrarily: its beginning is not known.)



After the Bolsheviks seized power, the position of Alekhine, with his noble origins, became more than precarious. After losing what remained of his parents' fortune, he was obliged to think every day about how to earn his living. In Moscow hunger and cold prevailed and there was no time for chess, but nearer to the summer of 1918 a small three-cycle match-tournament nevertheless took place: 1. Alekhine – 4½ out of 6; 2. Nenarokov – 3½; 3. A. Rabinovich – 1.

In the autumn Alexander made a dangerous trip to the south – to Kiev and Odessa. The civil war was at its height, and many towns were constantly changing hands... In Odessa a tournament was planned with the participation of some local masters – Verlinsky, Vilner and others, but Alekhine's main aim was to travel abroad by boat. However, the tournament did not take place, it was not possible to obtain a ticket on a boat, and Alekhine was stuck in Odessa until spring 1919. The terrible situation at the time was described by Ivan Bunin in his narrative diary *Cursed Days* and by Sergey Melgunov in his book *The Red Terror in Russia 1918-1920.* Everywhere there were mass arrests and shootings...

What happened next is related by Bohatirchuk, from the words of Yakov Vilner, who was working in the Odessa military tribunal: 'Alekhine was faced with the problems of how to survive and how not to lose hopes of becoming world chess champion. Some admirer of his chess genius found him work in the safest place – in the commission for confiscating valuables from the bourgeoisie! To work in the commission you had to join the communist party, which Alekhine did...' But he could not escape his fate: he was nevertheless arrested by the secret police – apparently, due to someone informing against him – and sentenced to be shot. However, literally a couple of hours before the sentence was carried out, Vilner managed to contact the Ukrainian Chief Commissar Khristian Rakovsky, who gave the order to free Alekhine (according to another version, he was saved by the Agriculture Commissar Dmitry Manuilsky, with whose consent Alekhine was living in Odessa).

After returning in the summer to Moscow, Alekhine was ready to give up chess and enter the State School of Cinematography. Fortunately for us, nothing came of this: at the end of 1919 he gave up acting and... travelled to Kharkov, where his elder brother Alexey was then living. He worked in the office of a military sanatorium, in the winter caught typhus (also a sign of the times!) and in May 1920 again returned to Moscow. Here, as a qualified lawyer, he at last found work in his speciality – as an investigator for the police central investigation department (this organisation helped people who had lost one another during the War).

Chess also staked its claim: Alekhine happily visited the 'club' apartment in block No.23 on Prechistensky (Gogolevsky) Boulevard, opposite the present Central Chess Club.

On one occasion Alekhine was demonstrating his game with Duras from Mannheim 1914, and someone asked him how he rated Duras's strength. 'Of course, he is a very strong player,' Alekhine replied, 'but when he is playing me, I always know what he is thinking about. But when I play Lasker or Capablanca, I have absolutely no idea what they are thinking about. Many of their moves are a revelation to me...' A highly interesting admission by the young grandmaster!

At that same time he took an active part in the organisation of the first championship of Soviet Russia (Moscow, October 1920) and he brilliantly won his tournament (which was quite strong, despite the absence of Rubinstein, Nimzowitsch, Bernstein, Bogoljubow and Znosko-Borovsky, who had ended up abroad): 1. Alekhine – 12 out of 15 (undefeated); 2. Romanovsky – 11; 3. Levenfish – 10; 4. I. Rabinovich – 9½ etc.

It need hardly be said what it was like to play for 20 days in a tournament, which took place on a background of general hunger and destruction. An unheated, poorly-lit room, problems with meals, and everything somehow barren. At the height of the battle, seven of the players demanded an increase in the bread ration and an immediate issue of cheese and cigarettes... Alekhine supported his colleagues, declaring that he did not consider it possible to play 'hungry opponents'. The participants' protest was largely satisfied, and it proved possible to finish the tournament.

Meanwhile in November the Moscow secret police, after receiving a signal from their Odessa branch, brought a new case against Alekhine. Fortunately, early in 1921, after a very detailed interrogation of the suspect, the charges of 'anti-Soviet activity' were dropped.

The Campaign for the Crown

The first 'championship of the Soviets' turned out to be Alekhine's last tournament in Russia. He had not given up his life's dream – to fight for the world crown.

In those difficult conditions in which he was living, the further development of his mastery was impossible, and in addition he needed to play in strong international tournaments. But the authorities persistently refused him permission to travel abroad. And Alekhine racked his brains: how to escape from Russia?! (In another turn of chess history, in the mid-1970s, Korchnoi found himself in a similar situation.)

He was helped by an accident. In the summer of 1920 Alekhine was transferred from the central investigation department to Comintern, where he worked as an interpreter, since he had an excellent command of French and German. He became a candidate member of the Communist Party (although Bohatirchuk writes that Alekhine showed him his Odessa party ticket back in 1919), and in the autumn he met the 41-year-old Swiss woman Annaliese Rüegg, who had come to Russia as a delegate to the 3rd International. And on 15 March 1921 (the day that the Lasker-Capablanca match in Havana began!) they were married. Annaliese was already expecting a baby and, naturally, wanted to have the birth at home, with the moral support of her husband. In view of this, in the words of Bohatirchuk, 'the persistent lady delegate obtained a reception with Lenin himself,' or in another version – with Karl Radek, who is supposed to have said: 'Alekhine may be a counter-revolutionary, but in chess he is a genius. He can display this gift only outside of Russia...' At any event, Alekhine received permission to leave, by a mystical coincidence, on 29th April, immediately after news had arrived from Havana about Capablanca's victory.

The newly-weds travelled via Latvia to Berlin and soon parted: Annaliese returned to her native Switzerland, where she safely gave birth to a son and concerned herself with his upbringing (without interrupting her political activity!), while Alexander set off on his long campaign for the world chess crown. He did not then know that he would never seen his native land again... But he periodically visited his son and after the death of Annaliese in 1934 he placed him in a good boarding-house, under the guardianship of the Swiss master Voellmy.

During the remaining half of 1921 Alekhine found time to play mini-matches in Berlin with Teichmann (+2 -2 =2) and Sämisch (+2), write his first book *Shakhmatnaya zhinzn v*

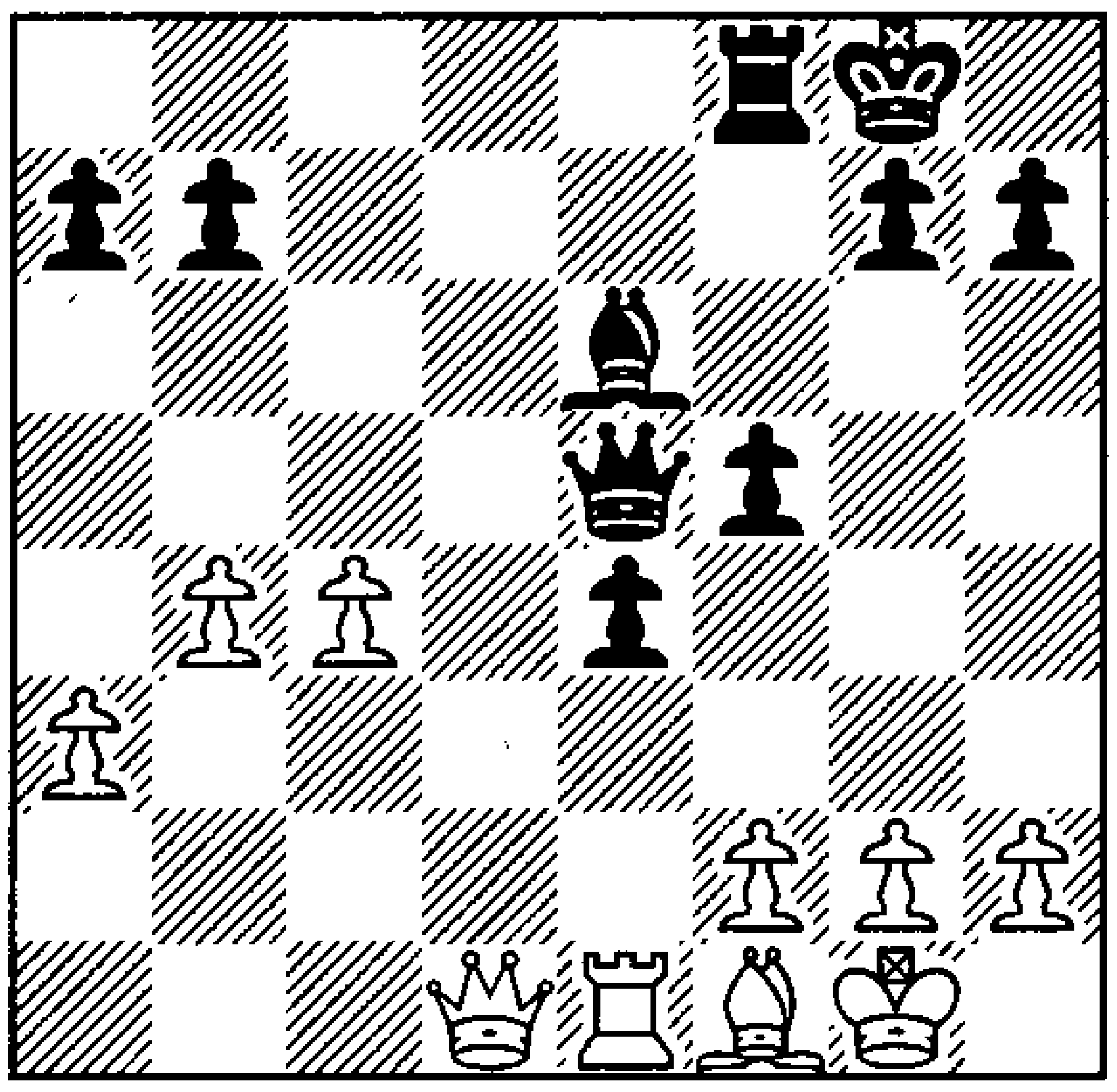
Sovetskoi Rossii (Chess Life in Soviet Russia) and to win three tournaments in a row, in all of which he was undefeated: the double-round tournament in Triberg (1. Alekhine – 7 out of 8; 2. Bogoljubow – 5), Budapest (1. Alekhine – 8½ out of 11; 2. Grünfeld – 8... 6. Euwe – 5½; 7. Bogoljubow – 5) and The Hague (1. Alekhine – 8 out of 9; 2. Tartakower – 7; 3. Rubinstein – 6½).

The following is not, perhaps, the most typical example of his play. Nevertheless it shows that Alekhine was blazing new trails in chess, not even giving in to the authority of the deified Capablanca.

Game 116

F.Yates-A.Alekhine

The Hague 1921



23...♕c3

Alekhine attaches an exclamation mark to this move (although I would have played 23...f4! immediately) and makes an interesting , somewhat malicious, comment:

'Against this move White has nothing better than to offer an exchange of queens, because after 24 ♖e3 Black would gain the necessary time by 24...♕f6 to occupy the d-file, which would be decisive.

'The ensuing endgame admits of a majority of pawns on the queenside for White, but this advantage is here somewhat illusory. On this subject I am anxious to state that one of the most notorious prejudices of modern theory lies in the fact that this majority is *in itself* considered an advantage, without any reference to whatever pawns or, more especially, pieces are concerned.

'In the present game Black has very evident compensations: (1) the greater mobility of the black king, the adverse king being hampered by his own pawns; (2) the dominating position of the black rook on the only open file. With correct play, these points should ensure a win.'

Alekhine would appear to be conducting a correspondence dispute with Capablanca, who classically converted a queenside pawn majority in the 23rd game of his match with Marshall (*Game No.75*). And although he clearly overrates Black's chances (the white pawns are also mobile!), these comments reflect his style: the advance of the e- and f-pawns creates tactical threats to the king. The most interesting thing here is the clash of conceptions: whereas Capa 'simply' queened a pawn, Alekhine 'simply' gave mate! But the successful strategy of both the one, and the other, depended mainly on the fact that their opponents did not understand their plans at all...

24 ♕c1

It is likely that 24 ♖e3 ♕f6 25 c5 ♖d8 26 ♕c1 was nevertheless possible, but White, remembering Capablanca's successful experience, heads for the endgame.

24...♕xc1

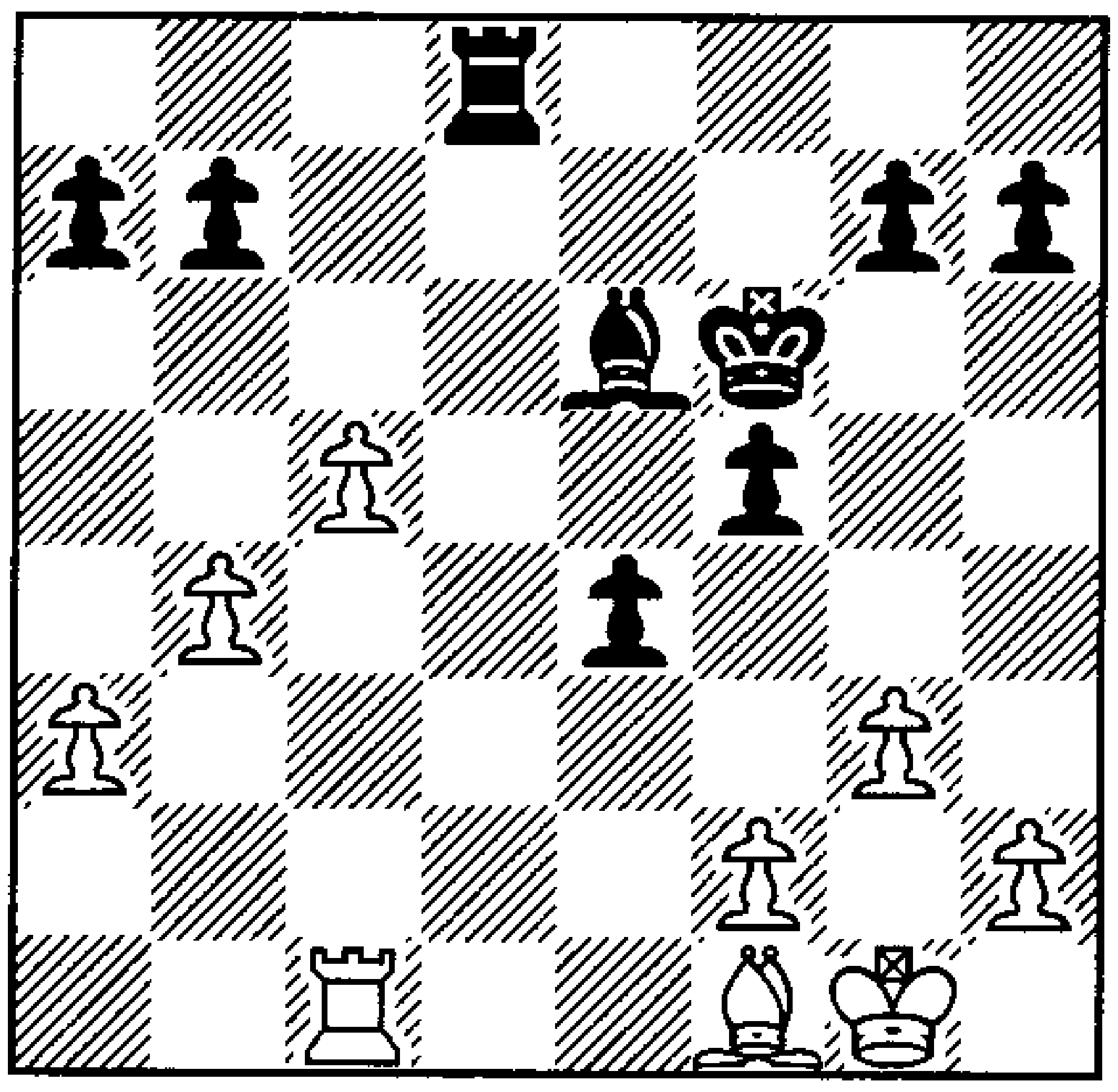
Black does not object, already anticipating the manoeuvre of his king to e5 and the development of an instructive attack with a small army. Fischer's remark involuntarily comes to mind: 'He disliked clear-cut positions. If an opponent wanted to clarify his situation with Alekhine, he had to pay the Russian's price.'

25 ♖xc1 ♖d8 26 g3

'Trying to exchange the bishops, which would increase White's chances of a draw.' (Kotov) 26 c5 ♔f7 27 b5 ♔e7 is good for Black.

26...♔f7 27 c5 ♔f6

An important moment, which has escaped the attention of the commentators.



28 ♗c4?!

The simple 28 c6! bxc6 29 ♖xc6 ♖d1 30 ♔g2 ♔e5 31 ♗c4 ♗xc4 32 ♖xc4 would have ensured a draw: 32...♖d2 33 ♔f1 etc. Of course, had Capa or Lasker being playing White, something like this would have happened... But Yates wants to advance his a- and b-pawns – as Capablanca 'bequeathed'!

28...♗c8! (this unexpected retreat was beyond the understanding of most of the masters of that time) **29 a4?!**

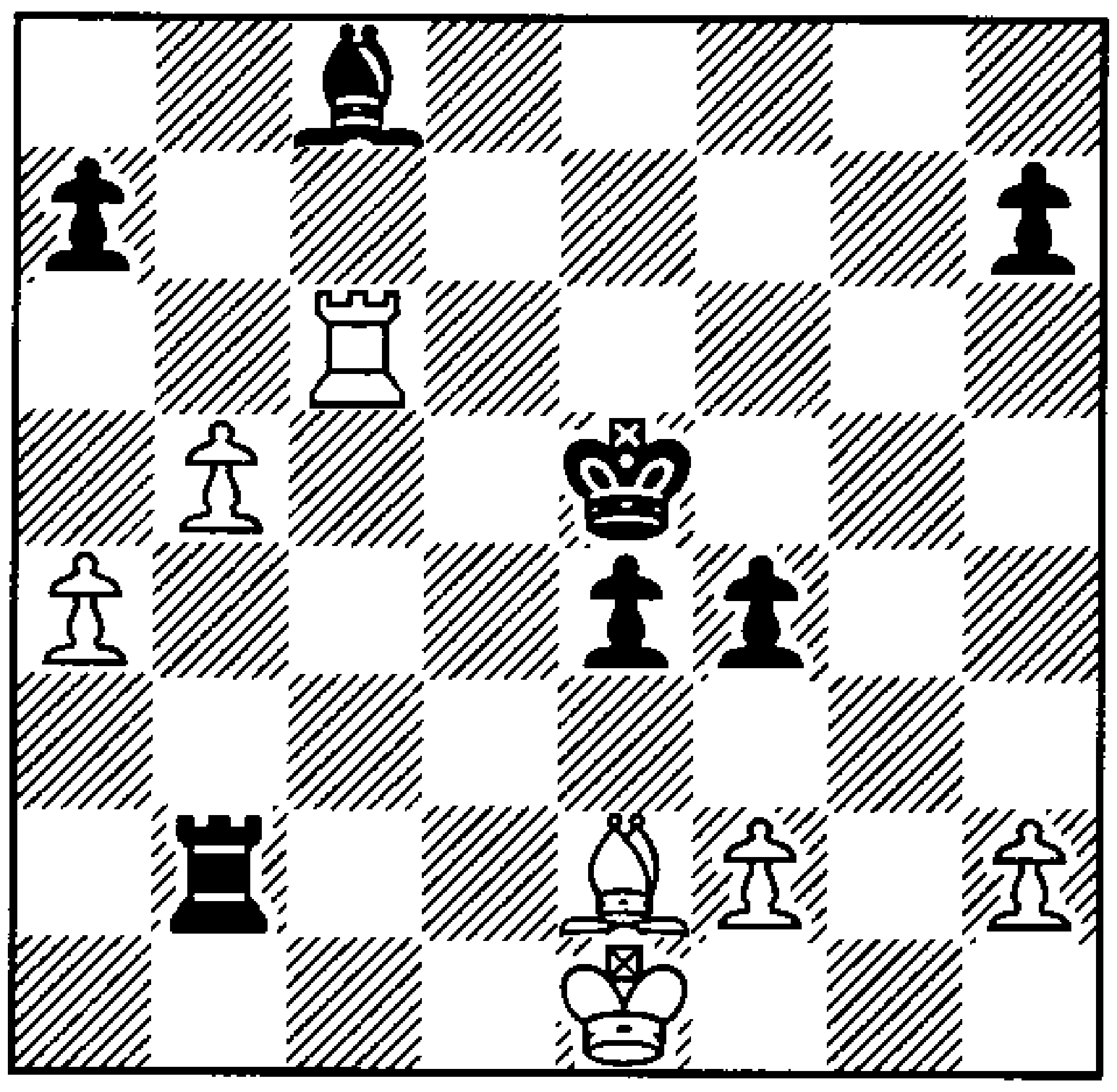
Evidently White should have moved his bishop from c4 and played c5-c6 as soon as possible. It soon transpires that the white pawns are 'going nowhere', whereas Black's are weaving a mating net.

29...g5 30 b5 f4 31 ♔f1 ♖d2! 32 ♔e1 ♖b2 33 gxf4 (after 33 c6 bxc6 34 ♗e2 there is a choice between 34...♔e5 and 34...c5 35 ♖xc5 ♗e6) **33...gxf4 34 ♗e2**

Or 34 ♖d1 ♗g4 35 ♖d6+ ♔e7 36 ♖d4 ♗f3 and 37...e3 (Alekhine). And here after 34 c6 bxc6 35 ♗e2, apart from 35...♔e5 there is 35...c5 36 ♖xc5 ♗e6.

34...♔e5 35 c6 bxc6 36 ♖xc6?!

'Bad is 36 bxc6 f3 37 ♗d1 e3 and wins.' (Kotov) But after 38 ♖c2! ♖xc2 (38...♖b1? 39 fxe3) 39 ♗xc2 there is no question of Black winning! Therefore after 36 bxc6 he would have had to continue seeking how to exploit his positional advantage.



36...♗e6 37 ♗d1

The awkward position of the bishop also tells in the variation 37 ♖c7 (37 ♗c4 ♗g4!) 37...♖b1+ 38 ♔d2 ♔d4 39 ♔c2 ♖a1! 40 ♗d1 (40 ♖xa7? ♖a2+) 40...♖xa4. Unexpectedly White's position has become lost: while rigorously carrying out the plan of a queenside offensive, he finds himself facing mate.

37...♖b1 38 ♖c5+ ♔d4 39 ♖c2 e3 (or 39...♗b3!? 40 ♖d2+ ♔c4 winning) **40 fxe3+ fxe3 41 ♖c6 ♗g4 42 ♖d6+ ♔c5 43 h3 ♗h5 0-1**

With the irresistible threat of ...e3-e2.

The autumn triumph in The Hague was especially noteworthy for Alekhine, since he finished 1½ points ahead of (and defeated in their individual game) the official challenger Rubinstein. (Back in the spring Rubinstein had challenged Capablanca to a match for the world crown, but alas, during the two and a half years granted him by the champion, he was not in fact able to raise the necessary funds.)

Without thinking for long, the Russian grandmaster also issued a challenge to Capablanca! A report even appeared in the press that a match between them would take place at the end of 1922 in America... But this all turned out to be a bluff. Later Alekhine admitted: 'I did not yet feel fully mature in the chess sense. In many fields, especially in technique, Capablanca was undoubtedly stronger than me at that time, and his main opponent still remained Lasker... Therefore my challenge had only one aim – to strengthen my candidature for the future.'

Here it is worth recalling a distinctive, as always, opinion of Fischer: 'Alekhine developed as a player much more slowly than most. In his twenties, he was an atrocious chessplayer, and didn't mature until he was well into his thirties.'

This is, of course, going too far, but I would like to see how Fischer himself would have played after the events between 1914-1921 described above...

The new challenger also performed quite well in the spring of 1922 in Pistyan: 1. Bogoljubow – 15 out of 18; 2-3. Alekhine and Spielmann – 14½; 4. Grünfeld – 11; 5. Réti – 10½ etc. Here Alekhine was awarded two special prizes: for the most brilliant game of the tournament (against Wolf) and for the best game played by a Slav master (against Tarrasch).

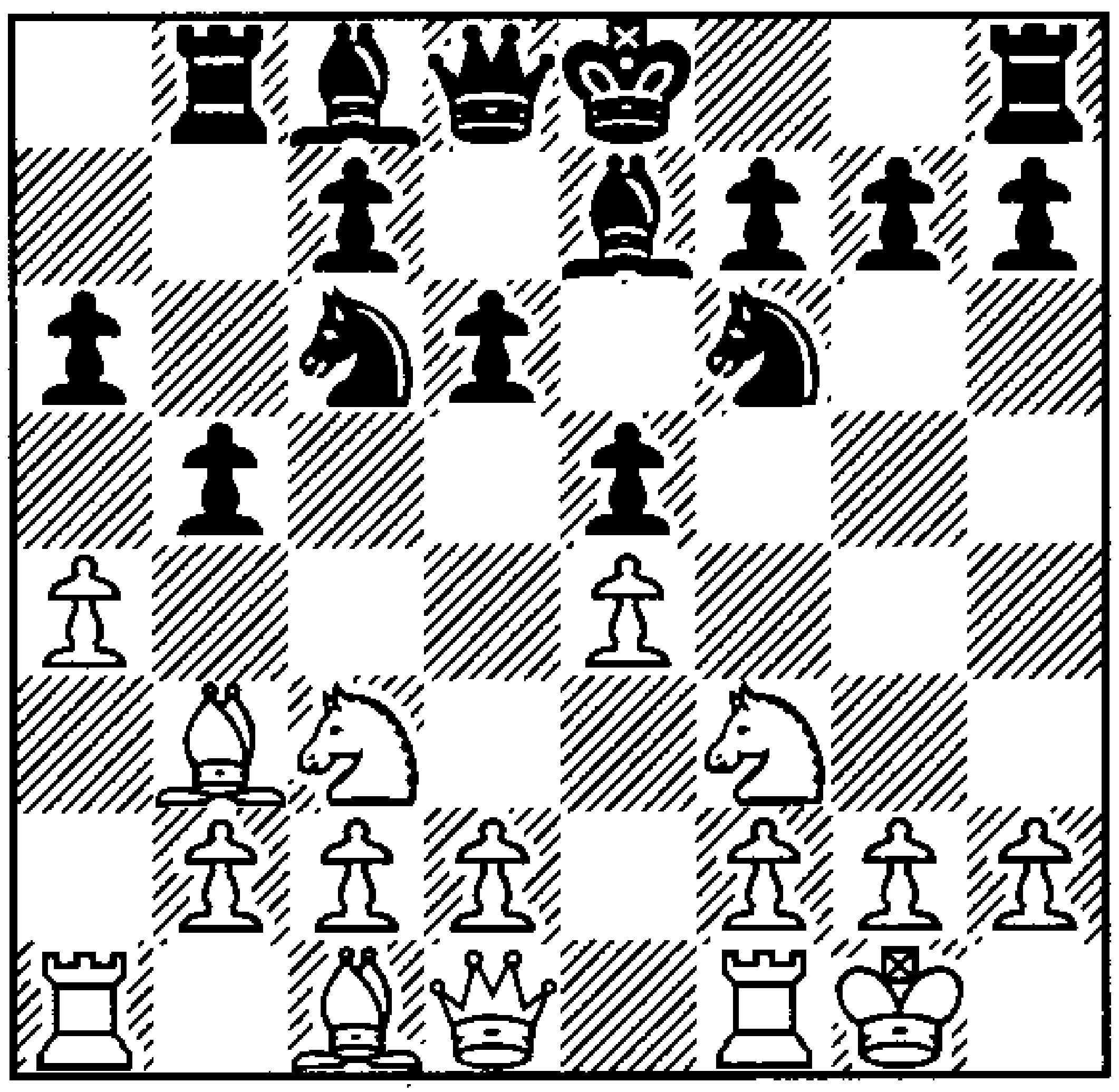
However, I will show you another brilliant game by Alekhine, of which he was very proud, since in it he carried out 'the longest combination in his life'. Although it turned out to have a flaw, discovered by the all-seeing eye of the computer...

Game 117
K.Treybal-A.Alekhine
Pistyan 1922
Ruy Lopez C84

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 (this modest plan was also employed by Alekhine) **5...♗e7 6 0-0 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 a4** (8 ♘d5 Alekhine-Barcza, Munich 1942) **8...♖b8**

'This move is distinctly inferior to 8...b4, for it abandons the a-file to White without any compensation.' (Alekhine)

For example: 9 ♘d5 (9 ♘e2 ♗e6!?) 9...♘a5 10 ♗a2 (10 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 11 d4 ♘xb3 is level, Thomas-Alekhine, Hastings 1922) 10...♘xd5 11 ♗xd5 c6 12 ♗a2 c5 13 c3 ♖b8 14 ♗d5 0-0 with equality (Alekhine-Bogoljubow, Pistyan 1922).

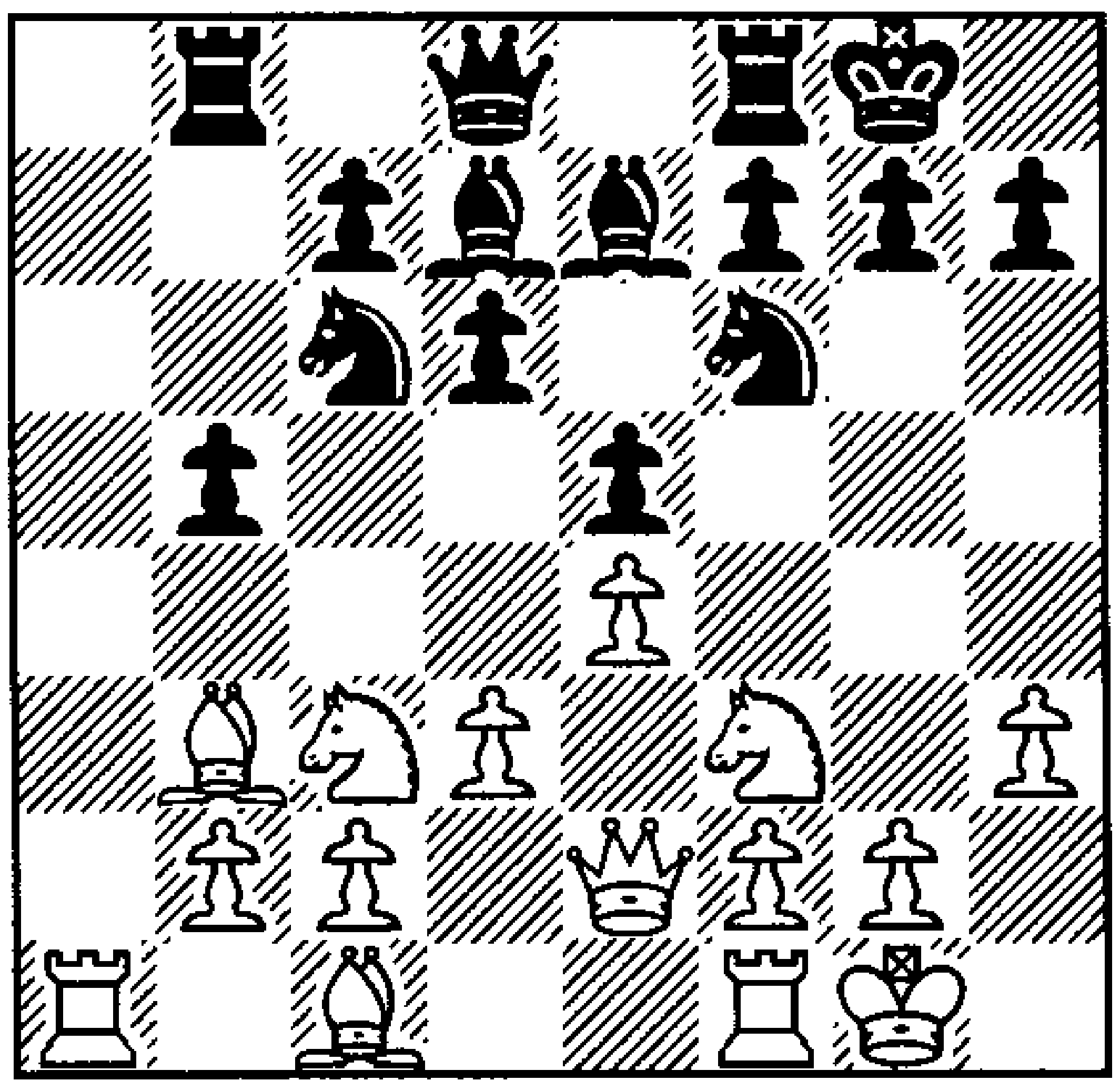


9 axb5 axb5 10 h3

Not an essential move. 10 ♕e2?! ♗g4! 11 ♘xb5 0-0 12 ♕c4 ♗xf3 13 gxf3 ♖xb5 14 ♕xc6 ♖b6 15 ♕c3 ♘h5! 16 d3 ♗g5 is risky for White, but quite good, according to Réti, is 10 d3 ♗g4 (10...0-0 11 ♘d5!) 11 ♗e3 0-0 12 ♘d5! with a slight initiative.

10...0-0 11 ♕e2 ♗d7 12 d3

If 12 ♘xb5, then 12...♘xe4! 13 ♕xe4 (after 13 ♘xc7?! both 13...♘xd2 and 13...♘c5 are good) 13...♖xb5 and Black has no problems (Ashley-Giorgadze, Philadelphia 1991).



12...♕c8!

'Insufficient would be 12...♘d4 13 ♘xd4 exd4 14 ♘d5 ♘xd5 15 ♗xd5 c6 16 ♗b3 ♗e6 17 ♗xe6 fxe6 18 ♖a7 ♖a8 19 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 20 ♕g4 ♕c8 21 ♗h6 ♖f7 22 ♖a1 with advantage to White.' (Alekhine) Although here 20...♕a2!? and 20...♖f6!? must be considered.

13 ♔h2

Just in case, Treybal prevents the bishop sacrifice on h3. Of course, more energetic was 13 ♗e3! (13 ♘d5!?), when Alekhine was planning 13...♘d8 and ...c7-c5.

13...♘d4! (now Black has an easy game) **14 ♘xd4 exd4 15 ♘d5 ♘xd5 16 ♗xd5 c6 17 ♗b3 ♗e6! 18 f4** (18 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 19 f4 f5 equalises) **18...♗xb3 19 cxb3 ♖a8!**

'Not 19...♕e6? because of 20 f5 ♕xb3 21 ♖a3 ♕b4 22 f6! ♗xf6 23 ♖xf6 gxf6 24 ♗h6 ♔h8 25 ♕f3 f5 26 ♕xf5 f6 27 ♖a7 and wins.' (Alekhine)

20 ♖xa8 (20 ♖b1?! ♕e6!) **20...♕xa8 21 f5 f6!?**

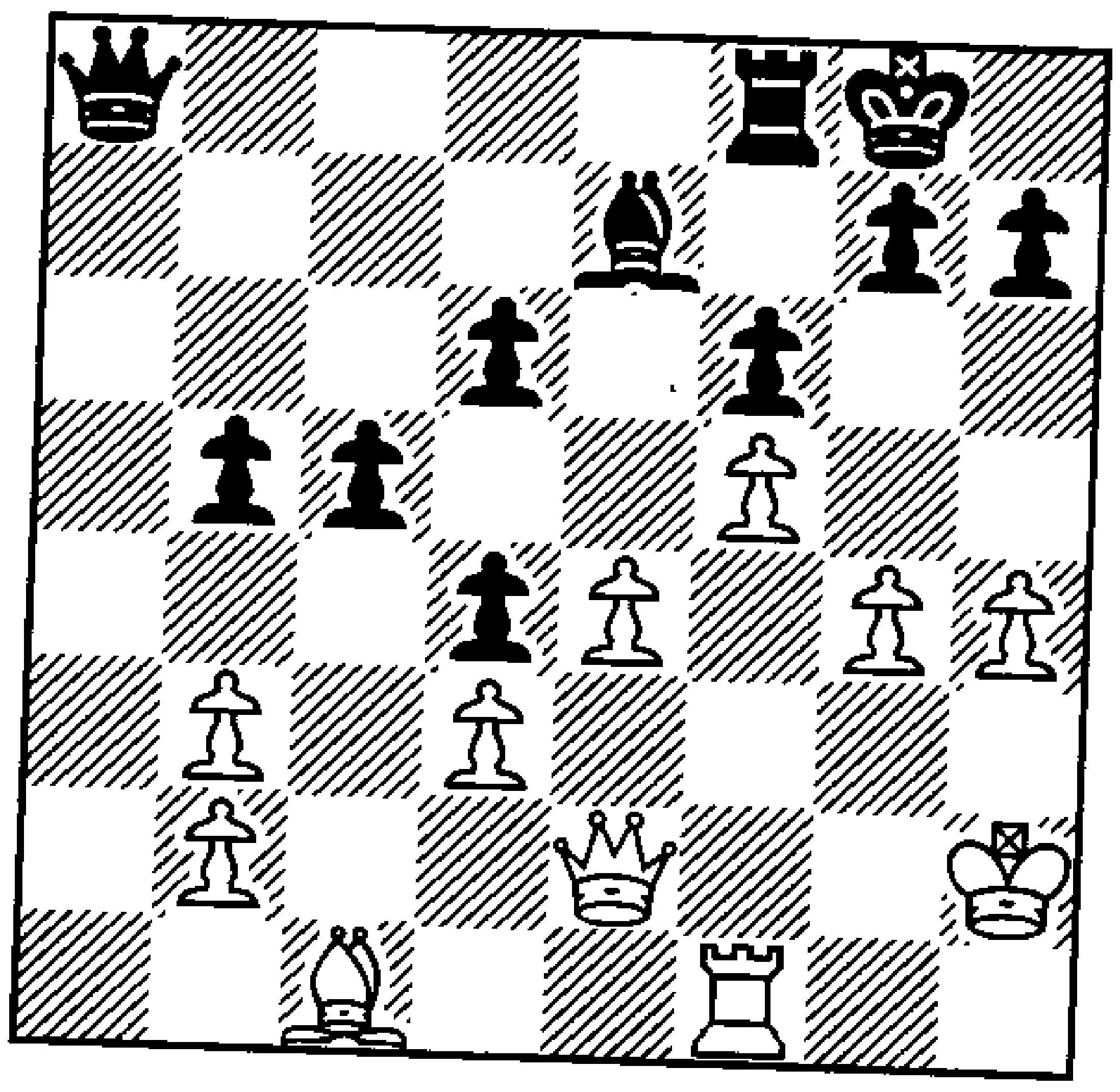
A secure barricade. Black was less attracted by 21...♗f6 22 ♗f4 ♖d8 23 ♕e1! 'followed by 24 ♕a1 or 24 ♕g3', although after 23...c5 there is nothing terrible for him.

22 g4!?

'Having embarked on a perilous journey, White has no option but to persevere, for, were he to adopt a purely defensive plan, Black would have a still more easy game than in the text, e.g. 22 b4 c5 23 ♕c2 ♕c6 followed by ...♖a8.' (Alekhine) And yet 22 ♗f4 was more natural, with equal chances.

22...c5 23 h4?

Overlooking a typical counter-blow in the centre. The cool 23 ♗f4 was still correct, and if 23...♕a2 24 ♕c2.

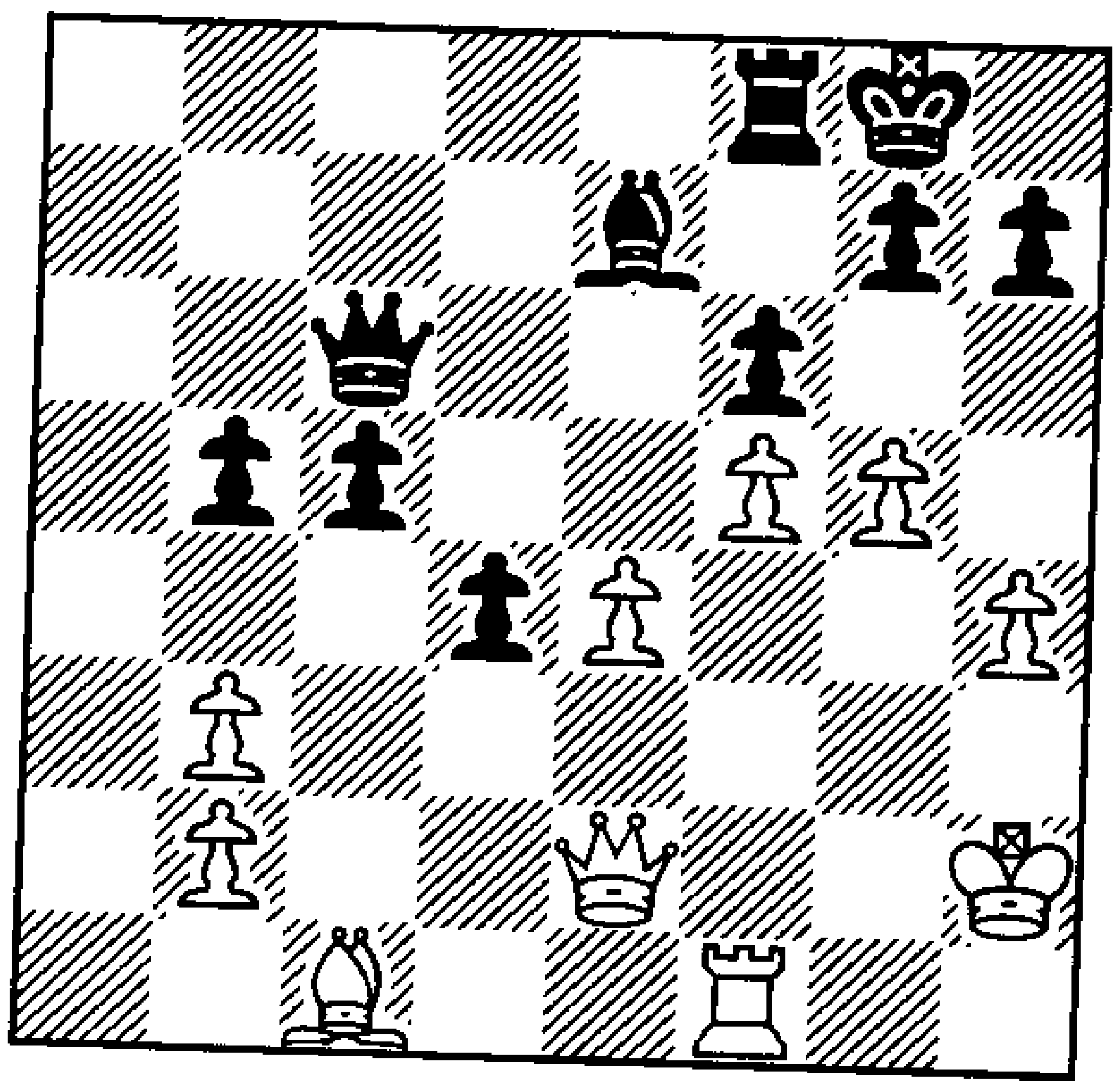


23...d5! (Alexander Alexandrovich did not miss such opportunities) **24 g5?!**

24 exd5 ♗d6+ 25 ♗f4 ♖e8 26 ♕g2 ♗xf4+ 27 ♖xf4 ♕b8 28 ♕f3 ♕e5 also favours Black.

If 24 e5 Alekhine was planning 24...♕b8 25 ♗f4 fxe5 26 ♗xe5 ♗d6 'with advantage to Black', but after 27 ♗xd6 ♕xd6+ 28 ♔g2 this advantage still has to be demonstrated. 24...fxe5 25 ♕xe5 ♗xh4 was rejected by the future champion because of 26 g5 ♖e8 27 ♕f4 ♗e1 *(27...♖e1!? – G. K.)* 28 f6! with an attack, although, in my opinion, much stronger is 26...♕e8! 27 ♕xd5+ (27 ♕xe8 ♖xe8 wins for Black) 27...♔h8 with the threat of ...♕h5: 28 ♕xc5?! ♗xg5! 29 ♗xg5 ♕h5+ etc.

24...dxe4 25 dxe4 ♕c6



26 ♔h3

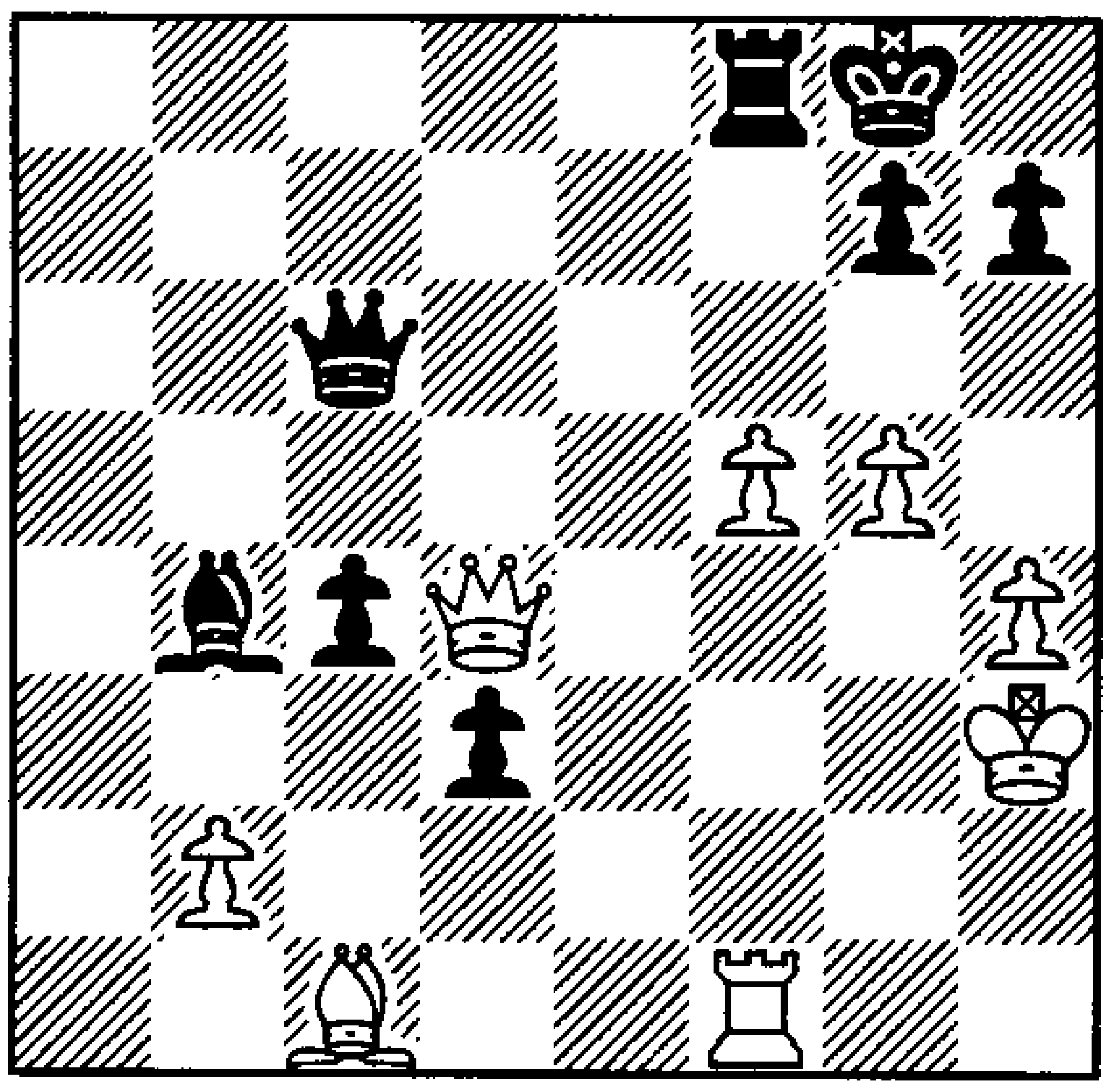
'Preparing e4-e5. If 26 g6 h6 27 ♕h5 ♕xe4 28 ♗xh6 gxh6 29 ♕xh6 ♕e2+ followed by 30...♕e3+ wins for Black.' (Alekhine) 26...♗d6+ is also possible, and if 27 ♔g2, then 27...hxg6 28 fxg6 f5! All the indications are that White can no longer save the game.

26...c4! 27 e5 d3 28 ♕e1!

If 28 ♕e3 Alekhine was intending 28...fxg5 29 hxg5 ♖xf5! 30 ♖xf5 ♕e6 31 ♕e4 g6 32 ♔g4 (32 ♕a8+ ♔g7) 32...gxf5+ 33 ♕xf5 ♕xf5+ 34 ♔xf5 ♗a3!! winning.

28...fxe5 (28...fxg5 29 ♗xg5!) **29 ♕xe5 ♗b4! 30 bxc4 bxc4 31 ♕d4!**

Threatening to break up the black pawns by b2-b3. Treybal fights to the last!



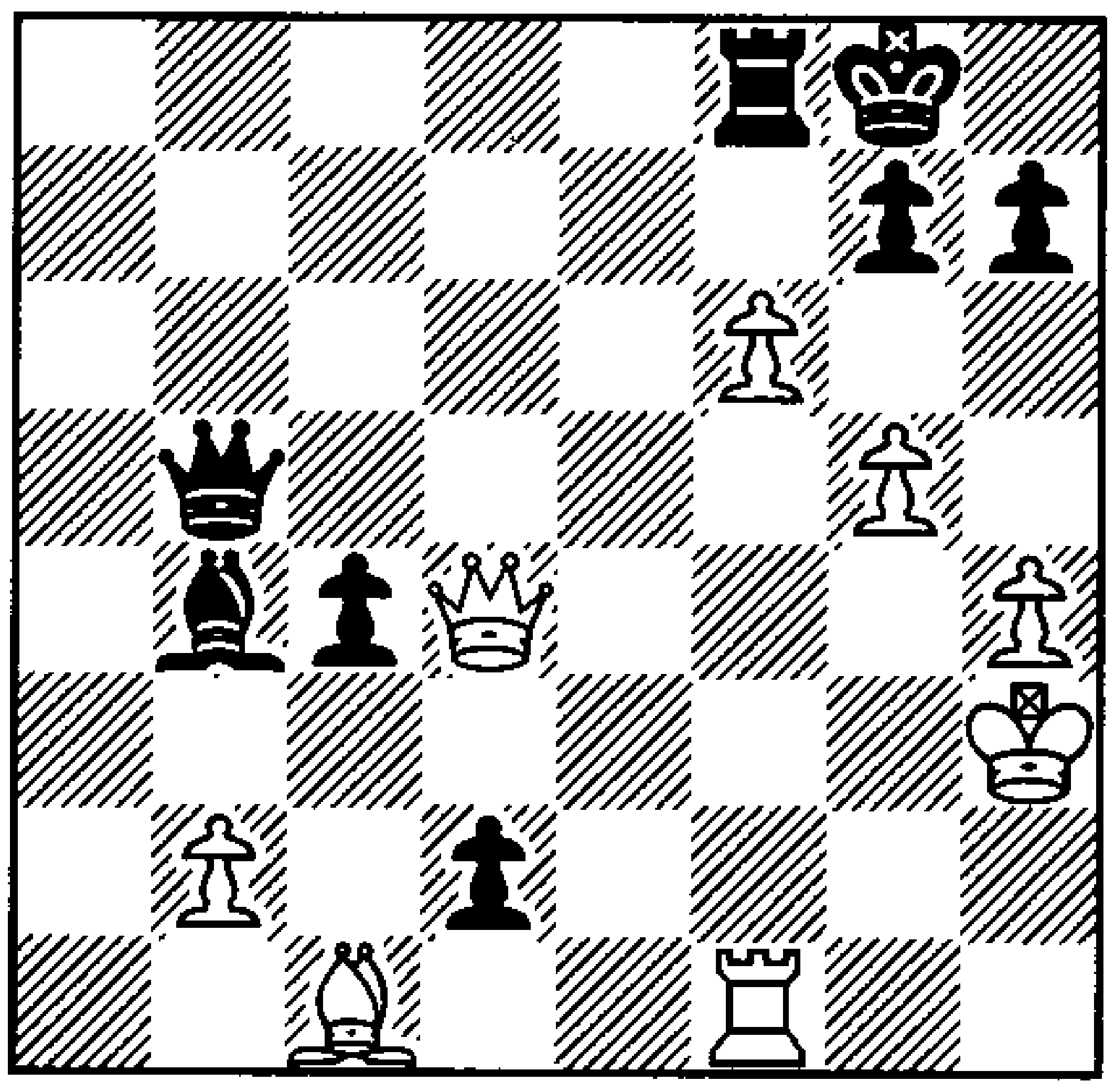
31...♕b5!

With the obvious threat of 32...♖xf5 and also a veiled one – 32...d2! 33 ♗xd2 c3! (a double attack!), which White underestimated.

32 f6?!

The computer condemned this move, suggesting 32 ♔g2. True, in this case Alekhine was intending to reply 32...♗a5! and then ...♖d8, which 'would also win without difficulty'.

32...d2! (a spectacular breakthrough at a reinforced point!)



33 ♕f4!

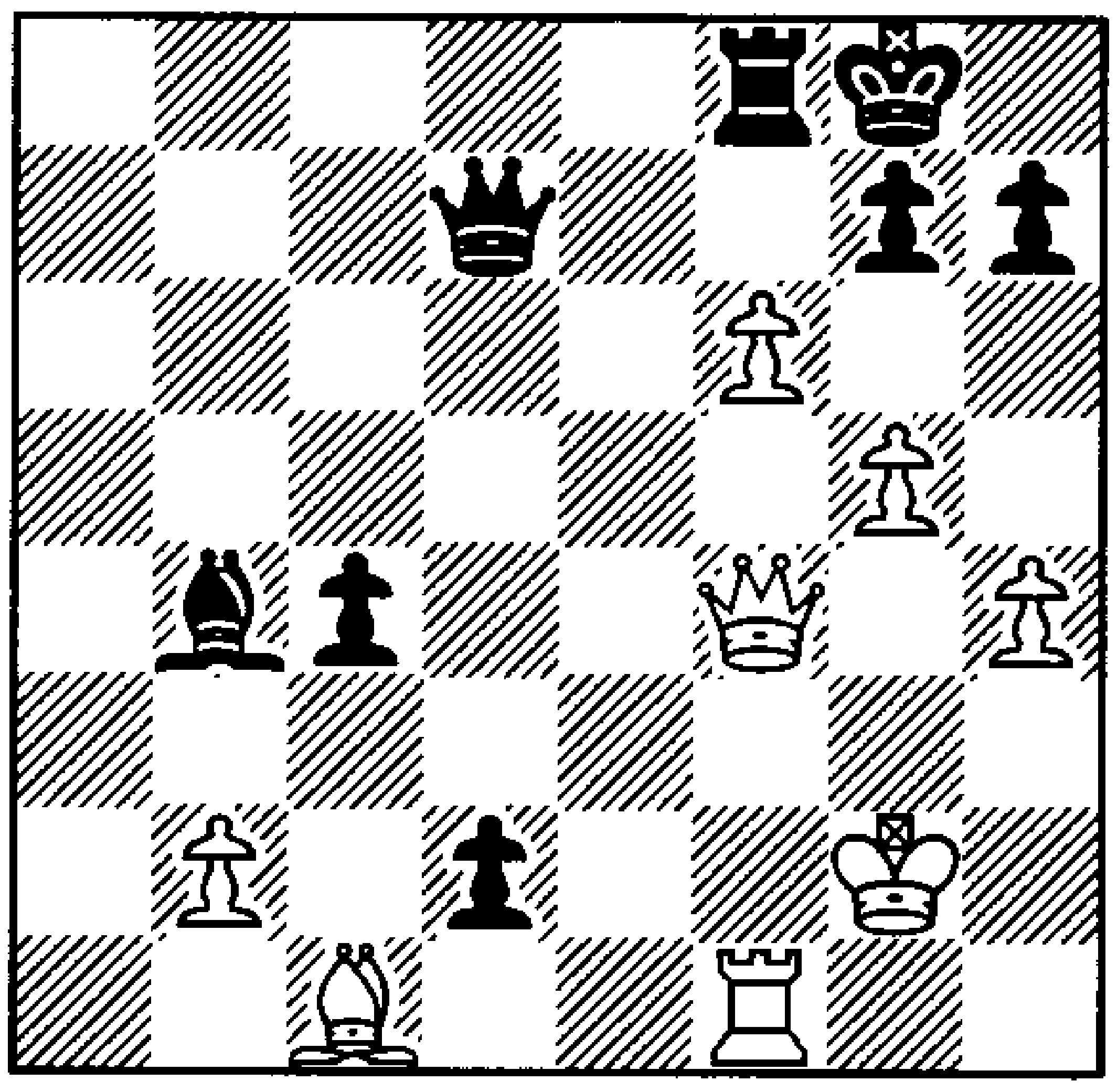
The best practical chance.

33...♕d7+!

White was 'anticipating the continuation 33...dxc1♕ 34 ♖xc1 ♖c8 (*no better is 34...♕d7+ 35 ♔g2 or 34...gxf6 35 ♕xc4+ ♕xc4 36 ♖xc4 – G. K.*) 35 ♕g4! with drawing chances, since the h1-square is not of the same colour as Black's bishop. By the ensuing combination (the longest which I have ever undertaken) Black avoids this doubtful variation and secures a winning pawn ending.' (Alekhine)

Well, we'll see, we'll see...

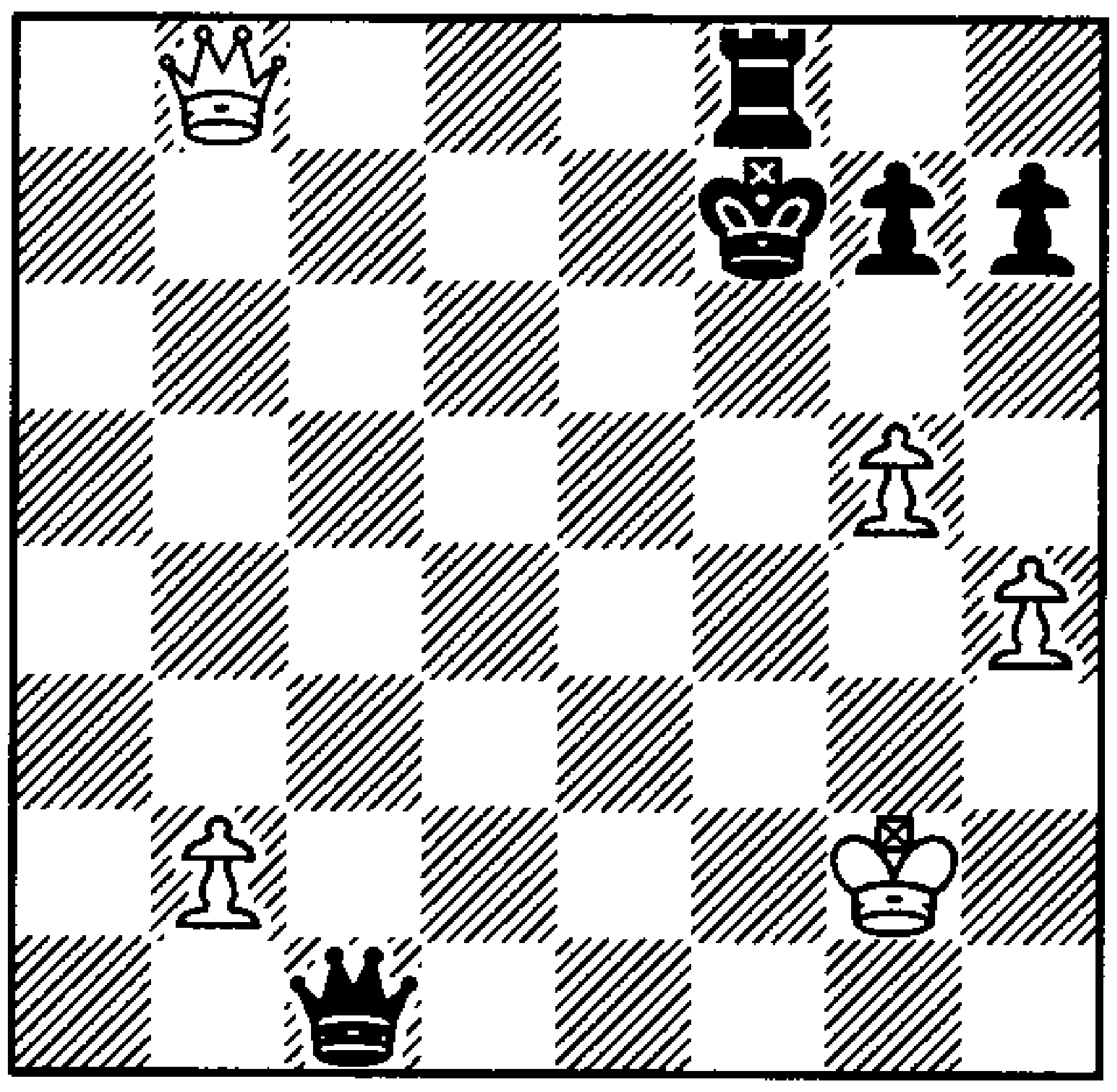
34 ♔g2



34...d1♕?!

Alekhine, Kotov and others attach an exclamation mark to this move. But in my opinion, Black would have won much more quickly, and – most important – more certainly by 34...♕d5+! 35 ♔h3 (35 ♕f3 ♕xf3+ 36 ♔xf3 gxf6) 35...♕d3+ (35...gxf6 36 gxf6 ♕e6+ is also good enough) 36 ♔g2 gxf6 37 gxf6 ♔f7 and ...♖g8+ (after the 'spite' checks 38 ♕c7+ ♔e6 39 ♕c6+ ♗d6).

35 ♖xd1 ♕xd1 36 ♕xc4+ ♖f7 37 ♕xb4 ♕xc1 38 ♕b8+ ♖f8 39 f7+! (the only way: after 39 ♕b3+? ♔h8 40 fxg7+ ♔xg7 the checks come to an end) **39...♔xf7**



The culmination of the tactical duel. 'As we shall see shortly, Black's winning manoeuvre initiated by 33...♕d7+! comprises no less than 20 moves!' (Alekhine)

40 ♕b3+? ♔g6! 0-1

White resigned due to 41 ♕e6+ ♔h5 42 ♕e2+ ♔xh4! etc.

Meanwhile, by 40 g6+!! Treybal could have regained the rook, since in the event of 40...hxg6 (40...♔g8? 41 gxh7+) White forces a draw by perpetual check: 41 ♕b3+ ♔f6 (or 41...♔e7 42 ♕a3+ ♔e8 43 ♕a8+ ♔f7 44 ♕d5+) 42 ♕f3+ ♔e7 43 ♕a3+ ♔e8 44 ♕a4+! ♔d8 45 ♕a8+ ♔e7 46 ♕a3+ ♔f7 47 ♕b3+ etc.

There remains only the one way, pointed out by Alekhine: 40...♔xg6! 41 ♕xf8 ♕xb2+ 42 ♔f3(h3) ♕c3+ 43 ♔g2 ♕d2+ 44 ♔g3(h3) ♕e3+ 45 ♔g2 ♕e4+ 46 ♔g3 (46 ♔h3 ♕f5+) 46...♕e5+ 47 ♔g2 ♔h5! (a quiet move, connecting up the king) 48 ♕f3+ (*? – G. K.*) 48...♔xh4 49 ♕h3+ ♔g5 50 ♕xh7 ♕e2+ 51 ♔g3(g1) ♕g4+, 'and Black wins by forcing exchange of queens next move.' (52 ♔f2 ♕f5+ or 52 ♔h2 ♕h4+.)

Alas, the computer refutes Alekhine's longest combination by 48 ♕b4! Now Black is unable to force the transition into a pawn endgame, and with the queens on such endings with an extra pawn are drawish. For example: 48...g6 49 ♔f3 ♕e6 50 ♔g3 ♕e3+ 51 ♔g2 ♕d3 52 ♕e7 h6 53 ♕b4 ♕e2+ 54 ♔g3 ♕e3+ 55 ♔g2 etc.

It follows that White missed a draw. It is evident that Fischer was right, when he stated that at the chessboard, Alekhine radiated a furious tension that often intimidated his opponents.

But Black, in turn, missed a win back on the 34th move, when he did not play 34...♕d5+! This game, on the one hand, demonstrates Alekhine's amazing calculating ability, but on the other hand it reminds one of an old truth, that any analysis longer than five moves will contain a 'hole'... even if we have before us a masterpiece from the treasury of chess art.

Here is another example of the energetic positional-combinative play of the fourth world champion.

Game 118

A.Torres-A.Alekhine

Exhibition game, Seville 1922

Ruy Lopez C73

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 d6

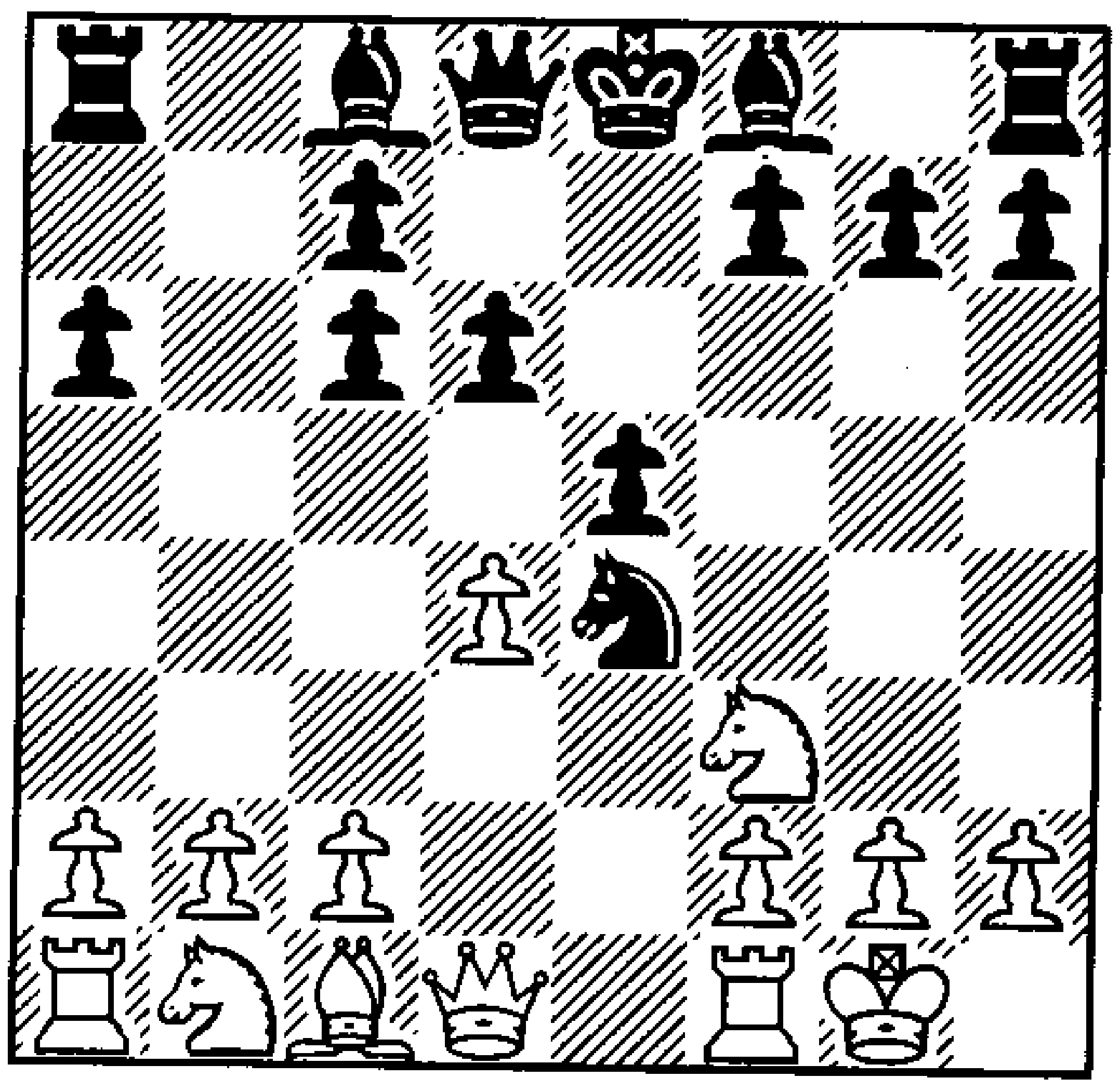
'This move, commended by Rubinstein, seems to me less sound than 5...♗e7.' (Alekhine)

6 ♗xc6+

One of the main replies, along with 6 c3 and 6 ♖e1. But if 6 d4, then 6...b5! 7 ♗b3 ♘xd4 8 ♘xd4 exd4 9 c3!? (9 ♗d5 ♘xd5 10 exd5 ♗e7 equalises Treybal-Rubinstein, Carlsbad 1923) 9...dxc3 10 ♘xc3 ♗e7 11 ♕f3 (11 f4 ♗b7) 11...0-0! 12 e5?! ♗g4 etc.

6...bxc6 7 d4! ♘xe4!

A sharp reply! 'The exchange 7...exd4 8 ♘xd4 leads to an unfavourable variation of the Steinitz Defence. Here Chigorin's move 7...♘d7 is also not especially favourable in view of 8 ♘a3 and ♘c4.' (Keres)



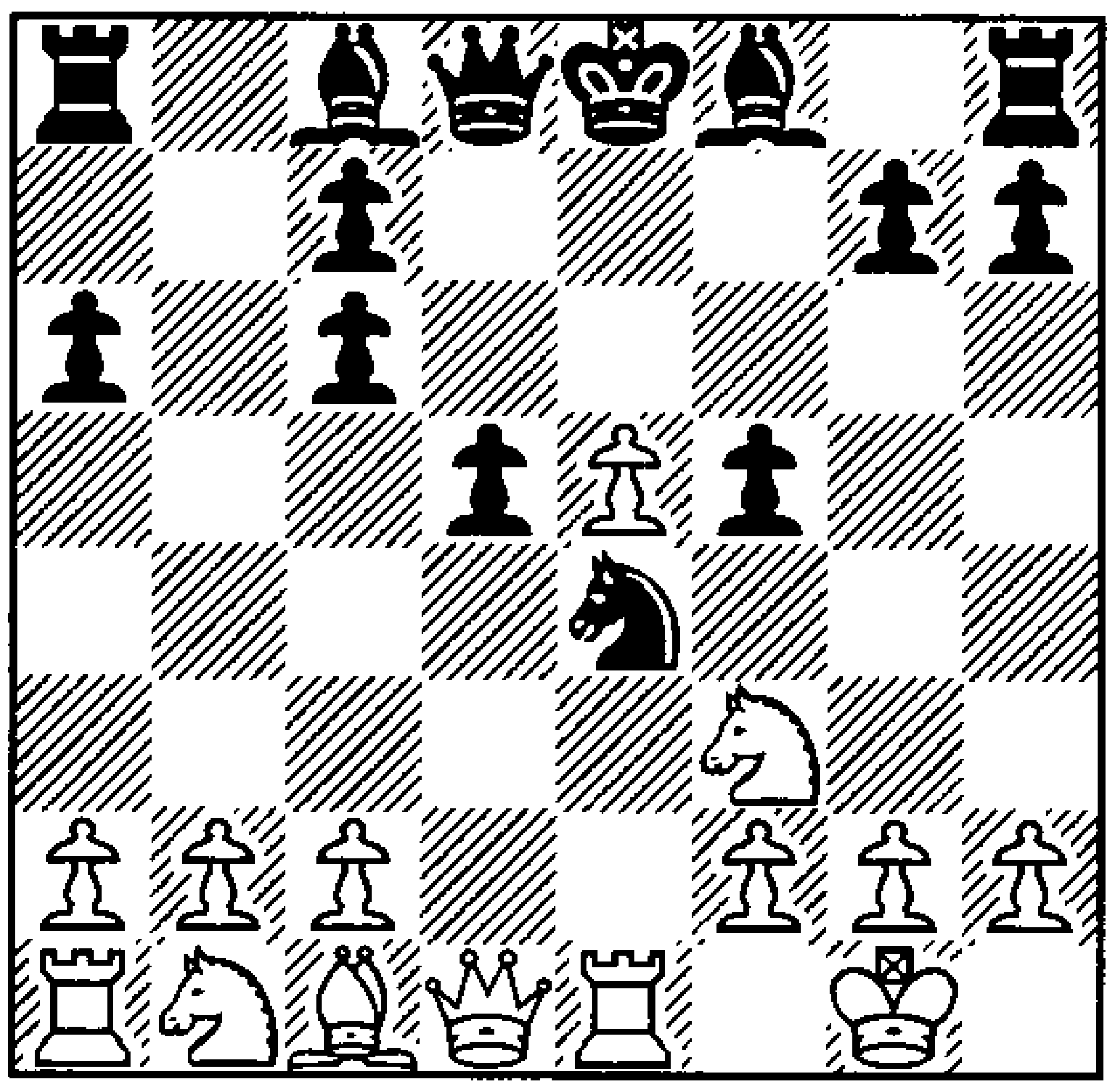
8 ♖e1

The alternative is 8 dxe5 d5 (8...♗e7!? Gurgenidze-Spassky, 29th USSR Championship, Baku 1961) 9 ♘bd2 or 8 ♕e2 f5 9 dxe5 (after 9 ♘bd2 ♘xd2 10 ♘xd2 ♗e7 11 dxe5

Euwe advises 11...0-0! 12 ♕c4+ ♔h8 13 ♕xc6 ♖b8) 9...d5, and here not 10 ♖d1 c5 (10...♗c5!? Euwe) 11 c4 c6 equalising (Rubinstein), and not 10 ♗e3 c5! 11 c3 ♗e7 (Kubanek-Alekhine, Prague 1943), but 10 c4! ♗c5 (10...d4!?) 11 ♗e3 with a slight initiative.

9...f5 9 dxe5 d5

'Now Black has undoubtedly the better game, with his two bishops and his strongly-posted knight in the centre.' (Alekhine) A clearly premature verdict!



10 ♘d4!

In the early 1940s 10 ♘c3 ♗c5 11 ♗e3 was fashionable (Boleslavsky-Smyslov, match-tournament, Leningrad/Moscow 1941), but stronger is 10...♗b4! 11 ♘d4 ♘xc3 12 bxc3 ♗xc3 13 ♗a3 ♕h4!, and if 14 ♘xc6? ♗e6! (analysis by Botvinnik). And in the late 1990s Adams introduced 10 c4!?

10...♗c5

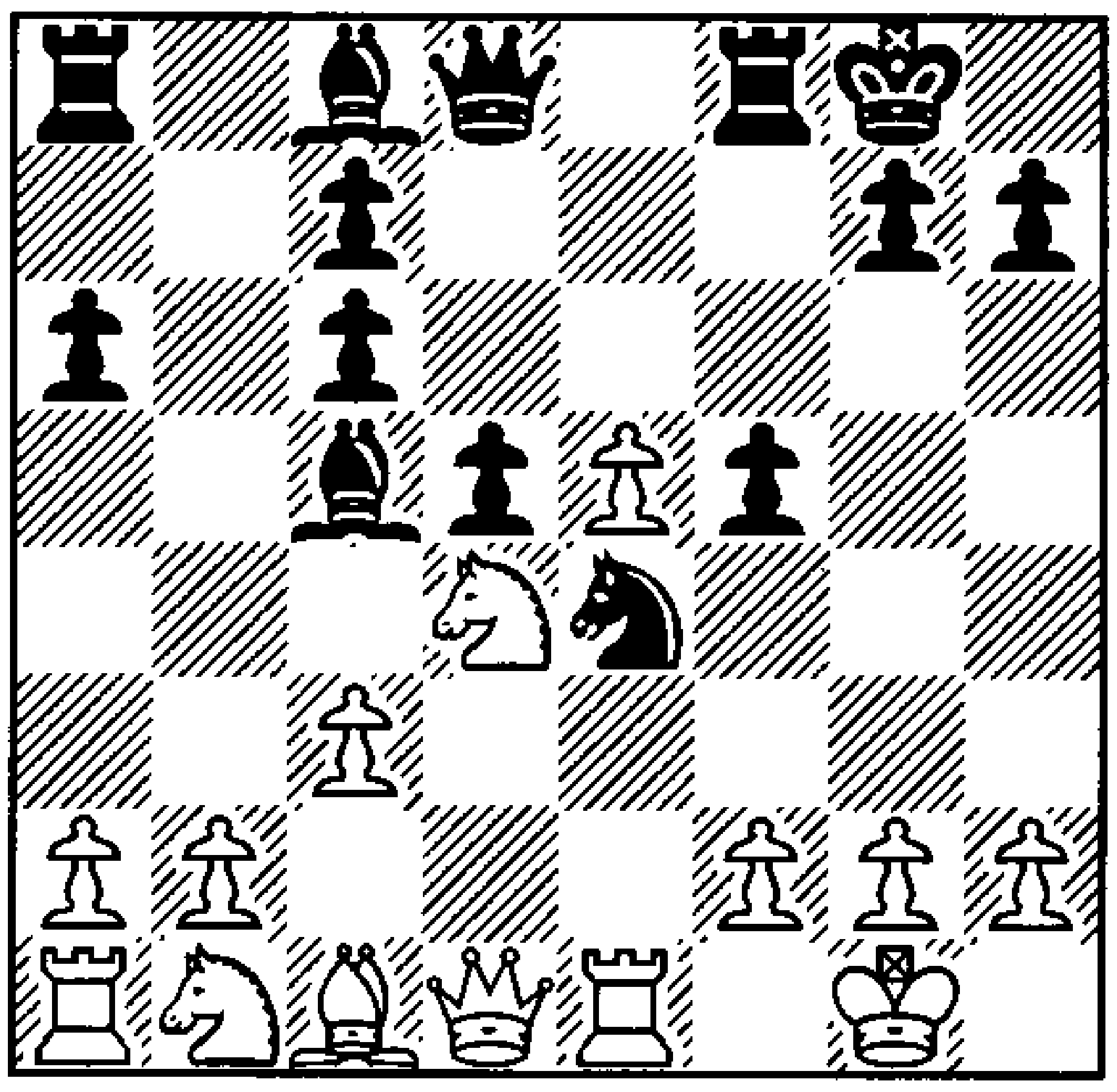
Bad is 10...c5? 11 ♘e2! c6 12 ♘f4 g6 13 c4! d4 14 ♕a4 (Keres-Reshevsky, AVRO Tournament, Holland 1938), whereas 10...♕h4 allows Fine's variation 11 g3 ♕h3 12 ♘c3!, after which both 12...♘xf2?! (12...♗c5 13 ♘ce2!) 13 ♔xf2 ♕xh2+ 14 ♔f3 and 12...c5 13 ♘de2! d4 14 ♘d5 ♘xf2?! 15 ♔xf2 ♕xh2+ 16 ♔f3! ♗b7 17 c4 are incorrect.

11 c3

If 11 ♗e3, then 11...f4! 12 ♘xc6 (but not 12 ♗xf4?! 0-0 13 ♗e3 ♘xf2! 14 ♗xf2 ♖xf2 15 ♔xf2 ♕h4+ etc.) 12...fxe3 13 ♘xd8 exf2+ 14 ♔f1 fxe1♕+ 15 ♔xe1 ♗f2+ 16 ♔f1 ♖f8 17 ♕xd5 ♗c5+ 18 ♔e1 ♗f2+ with perpetual check (Euwe). But 11 f3 ♕h4 12 c3 is interesting, excluding the possibility of 11...0-0.

11...0-0

Soviet masters later developed the very sharp continuation 11...♕h4!? 12 f3 ♘f2 13 g3! ♕h5 14 ♔xf2! (dangerous is 14 ♕e2 ♘h3+ 15 ♔g2 f4! 16 e6 0-0 17 g4 ♕h4, when 18 ♘f5? fails to 18...♖xf5 19 gxf5 ♘f2 winning) 14...♕xh2+ 15 ♔e3, and although for the piece Black has two pawns and some attack, in the game Bonch-Osmolovsky-Estrin (Moscow 1945) White was able to convert his material advantage.



12 f4?

At last the enormous difference in the class of the two players tells. Also weak is 12 f3 ♘g5 13 ♗e3? f4 14 ♗f2 ♗b6! 15 ♘d2 c5 (Romanovsky).

But the old game Flamberg-Salve (Lodz 1906) went 12 f3 ♘g5 13 ♔h1! ♗xd4 (according to Romanovsky, 13...f4!? 14 ♘xc6 ♕d7 15 ♘d4 ♕f7 is correct), and here Chigorin recommended 14 ♗xg5! ♕xg5 15 cxd4 (15 ♕xd4!?) 15...f4 16 ♘c3 ♖f5 17 ♘a4 ♕h6 18 ♖e2! ♖h5 19 ♕g1 with an obvious advantage to White – the c5-square! It was the same after 15...♖b8 16 b3 ♕h4 17 ♘c3 (Smyslov-Levenfish, Moscow 1938).

12...♕e8 (now Black's position is indeed significantly better!) **13 ♗e3 ♗b6 14 ♘d2 ♗b7**

'In perfect safety Black prepares the advance of his centre pawns, thus enabling his bishops to exercise pressure on the hostile king.' (Alekhine)

15 ♘2f3 ♖d8 16 ♕c2 c5 17 ♘b3?!

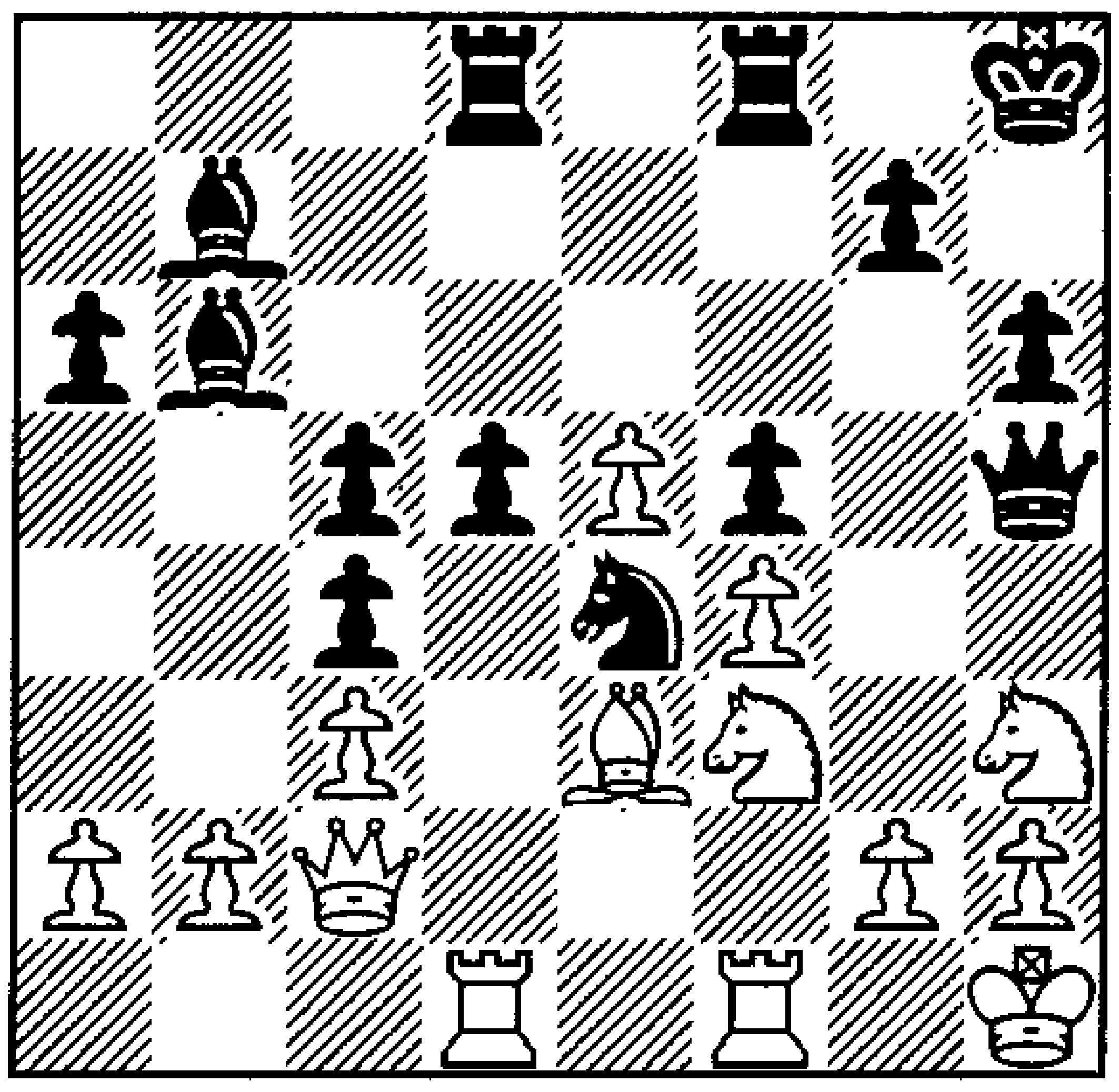
'17 ♘e2 at once was preferable, upon which Black would probably have continued 17...h6, followed by 18...♔h8 and 19...♖g8, preparing to open the g-file by ...g7-g5.' (Alekhine)

17...c4! (further intensifying the pressure in the centre) **18 ♘bd4** (18 ♗xb6? cxb3) **18...c5 19 ♘e2 ♕c6 20 ♖ad1 h6 21 ♖f1 ♔h8!**

An important link of the future combination: the king moves not so much to make ...♖g8 possible, but so that after ...d5-d4 White cannot take the c4-pawn with check.

22 ♔h1 ♕g6 (with the intention of ...♕h5 and ...g7-g5) **23 ♘eg1 ♕h5 24 ♘h3**

By defending against the flank attack, Torres goes from the frying pan into the fire.



24...d4! (the decisive breakthrough, based on a queen sacrifice) **25 cxd4 cxd4 26 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 27 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 28 ♘xd4 ♕xh3! 29 gxh3 ♘f2++ 30 ♔g1 ♘xh3 mate!**

In the summer of 1922, in the London 'victory tournament', the first direct duel after the War between Alekhine and Capablanca took place. The Russian played well (+8 =7), but the Cuban played even better (+11 =4). The results of this tournament are given on p.296, but the moral outcome for Alekhine was the start of his gradual advance to the role of main contender to the throne: he left behind Rubinstein, and Bogoljubow, and Réti (true, the picture was somewhat obscured by the absence of the still mighty Lasker). At the same time the participants signed the so-called 'London agreement' – the regulations for world championship matches proposed by Capablanca (cf. p.299).

The double-round tournament at Hastings in September 1922 reinforced this tendency: 1. Alekhine – 7½ out of 10; 2. Rubinstein – 7; 3-4. Bogoljubow and Thomas – 4½ etc. Alexander again, as in London (and The Hague!) defeated Rubinstein once, and Bogoljubow twice.

The last of these wins is one of the most grandiose Alekhine canvases. It once again shows that his amazing combinations did not arise out of thin air, but were the fruit of very deep strategic preparation.

Game 119

E.Bogoljubow-A.Alekhine

Hastings 1922
Dutch Defence A90

1 d4 f5

'A risky defence which up to the present I have adopted only very infrequently in serious games. But in the present game I had positively to play for a win in order to make sure of first prize, whereas a draw was sufficient for my opponent to secure third prize, and hence I found myself forced to run some risks.' (Alekhine)

2 c4

According to Alekhine it is better to begin with 2 g3, so that Black should not be able to exchange his f8-bishop. But is this really to his advantage?

2...♘f6 3 g3 e6 4 ♗g2 ♗b4+ 5 ♗d2

If 5 ♘d2 correct is 5...0-0!, but not 5...♘e4? 6 a3 ♘xd2 7 ♗xd2 ♗xd2+ 8 ♕xd2 0-0 9 ♘h3! d5 10 cxd5 exd5 11 ♘f4 c6 12 0-0 ♕e7 13 b4! with a clear advantage (Alekhine-

Tartakower, San Remo 1930).

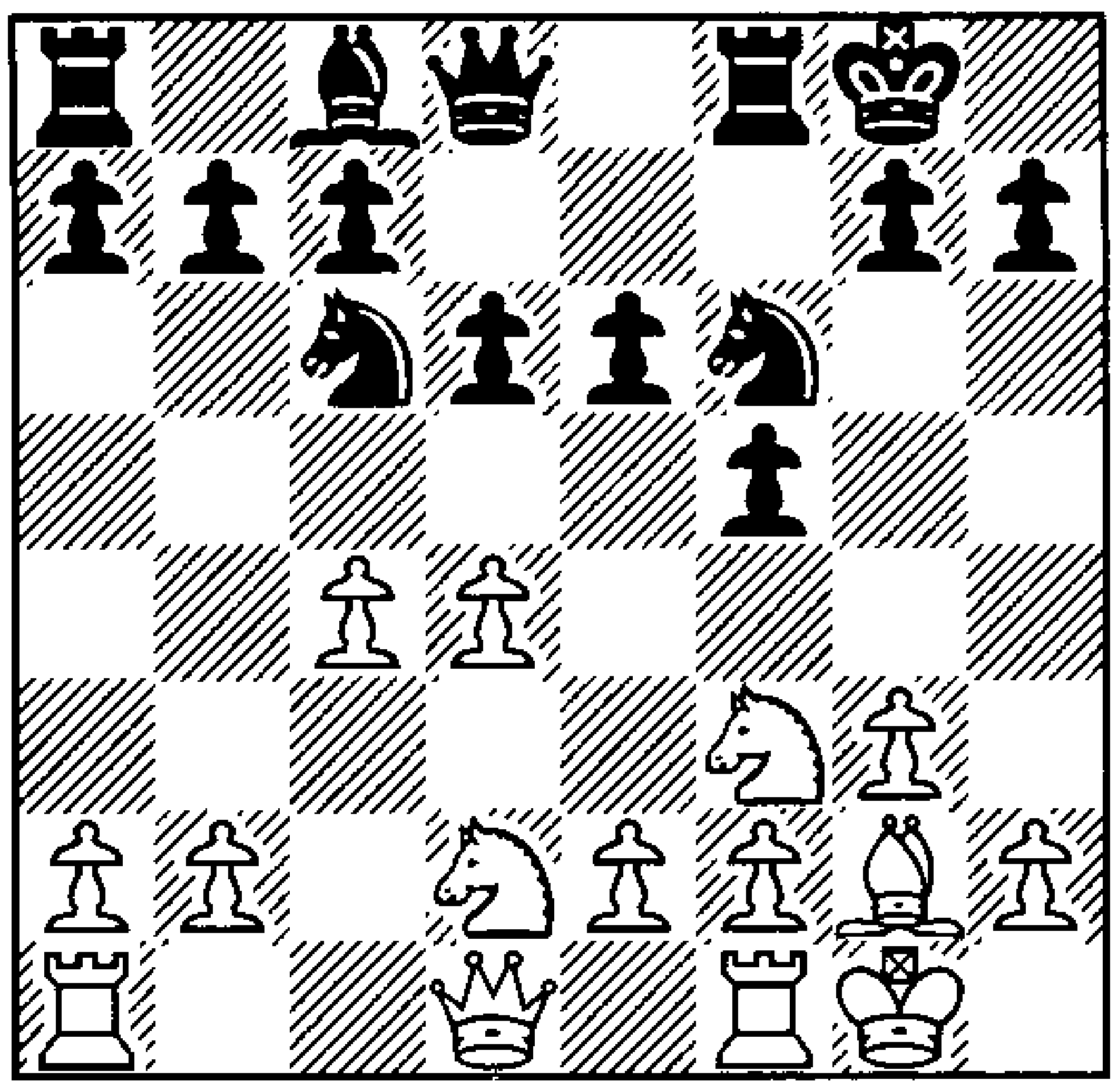
5...♗xd2+

In his match with Euwe (1935) and later, the fourth world champion played 5...♗e7.

6 ♘xd2

Of course, more accurate is 6 ♕xd2! 0-0 7 ♘c3 with some initiative, which in the event of 7...d6 8 ♘f3 ♘c6 9 ♖d1!? (or 9 0-0 e5 10 d5 ♘e7 11 e4) 9...♘e7 (9...♕e7 10 d5!) 10 0-0 ♘g6 11 ♕c2 c6 (11...f4!?) 12 e4! ♕a5 13 exf5 exf5 14 d5 cxd5 15 ♘xd5 can become serious (Euwe-Alekhine, Amsterdam 10th matchgame 1926/27).

6...♘c6 7 ♘gf3 0-0 8 0-0 (Tartakower suggested 8 ♕c2!? with the idea of e2-e4) **8...d6**



9 ♕b3 ♔h8?!

For some reason most commentators don’t mention the immediate 9...e5!, when Black need not fear either 10 c5+ ♔h8 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 ♖fd1 ♕e7 13 ♖ac1 ♗d7, or 10 ♕c3 a5! 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 ♖ad1 ♕e7 with equal chances in both cases (Spielmann).

10 ♕c3?!

‘It is already difficult to suggest a satisfactory line of play for White.’ (Alekhine) Why? After 10 d5! Black would have faced a thankless defence: 10...♘a5 11 ♕c3 c5 12 ♘g5 or 10...exd5 11 cxd5 ♘e7 (11...♘e5 12 ♘d4!) 12 ♘d4 etc.

10...e5! 11 e3

No better is 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 ♖ad1 (12 ♘xe5? ♘xe5 13 ♕xe5 ♕xd2 drops a piece) 12...♕e7 13 ♖fe1 e4 etc. (Pirc-Spielmann, Rogaëka Slatina match 1931).

11...a5! (hindering b2-b4) **12 b3** (but not 12 a3?! a4!) **12...♕e8! 13 a3 ♕h5!**

‘The start of a deep strategic plan. First of all Black creates threats on the kingside and provokes a weakening of the opponent’s pawns.’ (Kotov)

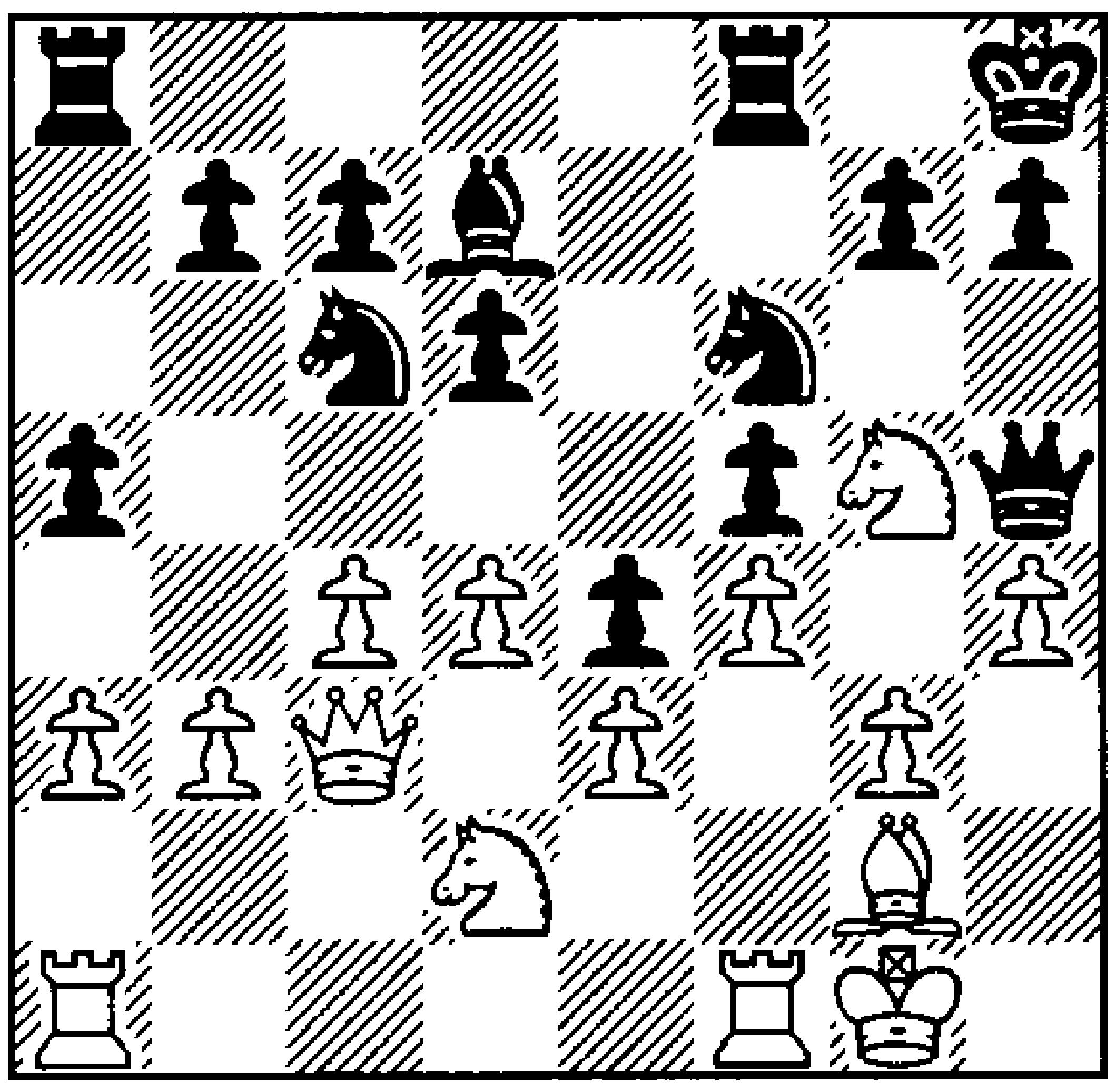
14 h4

‘A good defensive move, which secures new squares for his king’s knight and revives the threat of 15 dxe5. White cannot answer 14 dxe5 dxe5 15 ♘xe5? ♘xe5 16 ♕xe5 on account of 16...♘g4, winning outright, nor can he play 14 b4? e4 15 ♘e1 axb4.’ (Alekhine)

14...♘g4 15 ♘g5?! (according to Alekhine, 15 b4 was preferable) **15...♗d7 16 f3**

16 ♗xc6?! ♗xc6 17 f3 was bad because of 17...exd4! 18 fxg4 dxc3 19 gxh5 cxd2 with the better endgame for Black.

16...♘f6 (with the threat of 17...f4!) **17 f4 e4**



18 ♖fd1?!

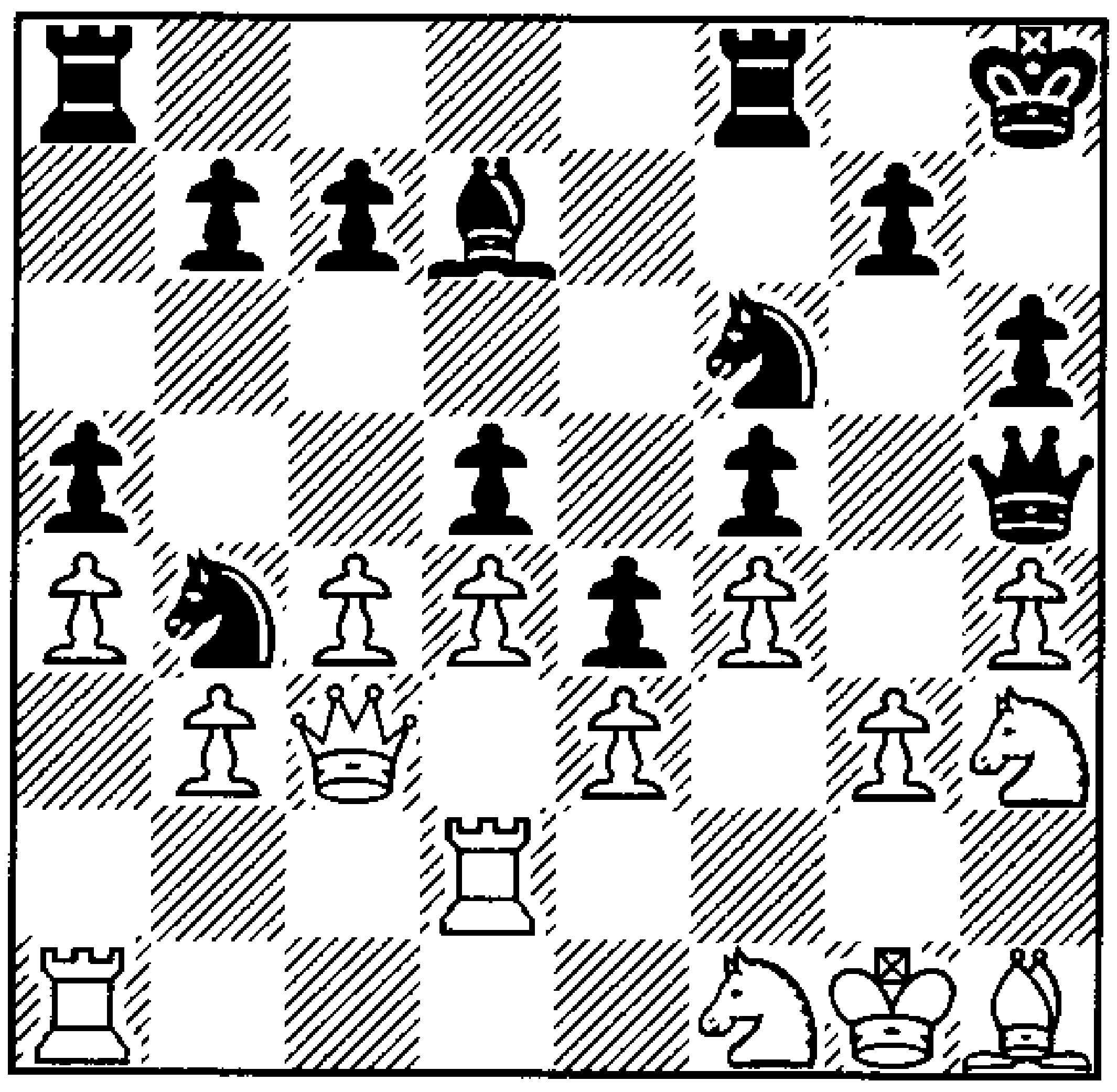
‘In order to protect the g3-pawn (which was threatened by 18...♕g4 and 19...♘h5) by ♘f1. However, the preliminary advance 18 d5!, preventing Black from forming a centre, would have yielded White more chances of a successful defence.’ (Alekhine)

18...h6 19 ♘h3 d5!

‘By this move Black completely wrecks his opponent’s hopes in the centre.’ (Alekhine) ‘The white pawns on the kingside have been weakened, and Black begins carrying out the second part of his plan: by initiating active play on the queenside, in the end he breaks through from the rear to the white king's position.' (Kotov)

20 ♘f1 ♘e7 (preparing 21...a4! 22 b4 dxc4 and ...♘ed5) **21 a4 ♘c6!** (and now ...♘b4-d3 is on the agenda) **22 ♖d2 ♘b4 23 ♗h1**

Such moves are not made willingly...



23...♕e8!

'This very strong move yields Black a new advantage in every case: either control of the square d5 after 24 cxd5, or the opening of a file on the queenside after 24 c5 b5!, or lastly, as in the actual game, the win of a pawn.' (Alekhine)

24 ♖g2 (with the illusory hope of playing g3-g4) **24...dxc4 25 bxc4 ♗xa4 26 ♘f2 ♗d7 27 ♘d2 b5!**

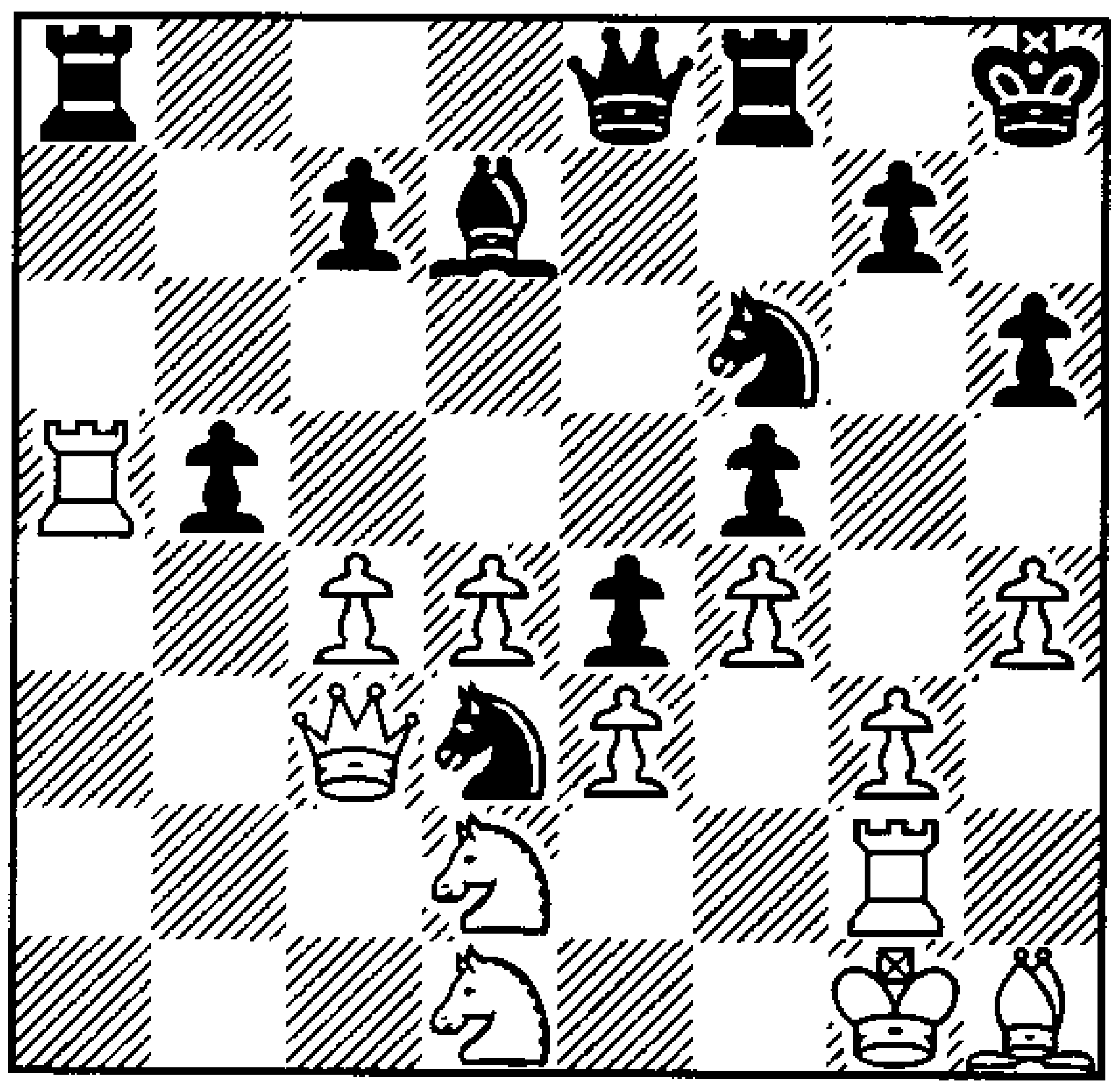
'This important strategic thrust in the battle for the d5-square leads to a highly interesting combination. The b-pawn is about to accomplish great deeds!' (Kotov)

28 ♘d1 ♘d3!

White's position looks terrible, but after the artless 28...bxc4?! 29 ♘xc4 ♘fd5 30 ♕a3 his wretched knight would have gained access to the e5-square and the coordination of his scattered forces would have been unexpectedly restored.

29 ♖xa5

The attempt to regain the pawn leads to disaster. But 29 cxb5 ♗xb5 30 ♖xa5 was no better in view of 30...♘d5 31 ♕a3 ♖xa5 32 ♕xa5 ♕c6 with a winning attack (Alekhine) or 31 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 32 ♕b3 ♗a4 etc.

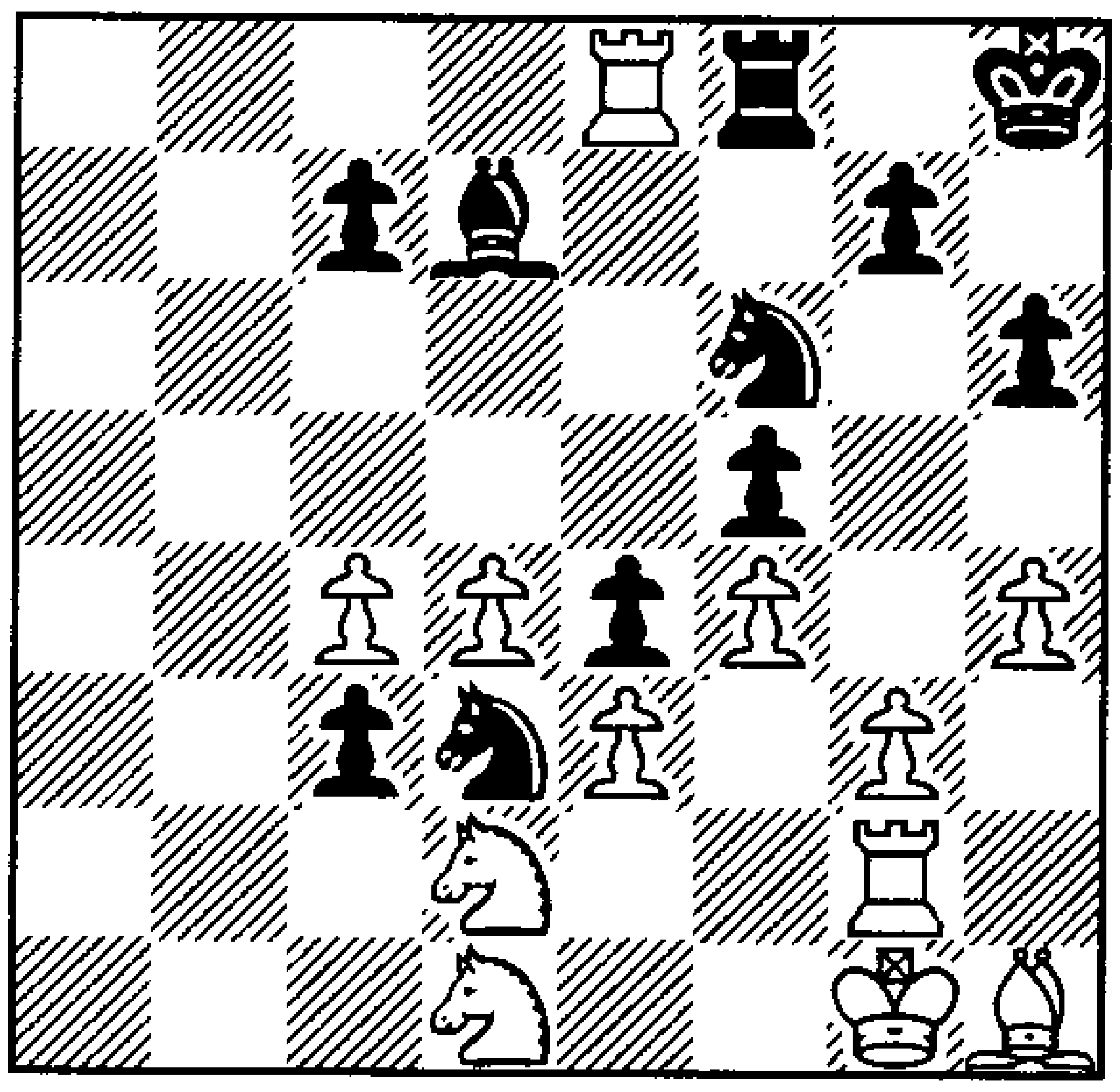


29...b4! 30 ♖xa8 (after 30 ♕a1 ♖xa5 31 ♕xa5 ♕a8! 32 ♕xa8 ♖xa8 the invasion of the rook is decisive) **30...bxc3!!**

A brilliant interposition! 'This continuation is much stronger than 30...♕xa8 31 ♕b3 ♗a4 32 ♕b1, after which White could still defend himself.' (Alekhine) However, after the simple 31...♕a1! 32 ♕b1 ♖a8 he would quickly have lost... Black wants to create something immortal willy-nilly.

31 ♖xe8

There is no choice.



31...c2!!

'The point! White cannot prevent this pawn from queening.' (Alekhine) Truly, as Alexander Alexandrovich used to say, 'combination is the soul of chess'.

32 ♖xf8+ ♔h7

White's queen's rook can be proud: it has devoured Black's queen and both his rooks. But on its own the modest b7-pawn cancels out these achievements! The complete triumph of mind over matter!

33 ♘f2 (there is nothing else) **33...c1♕+ 34 ♘f1 ♘e1!**

With the unexpected threat of ...♘f3 mate.

35 ♖h2 ♕xc4

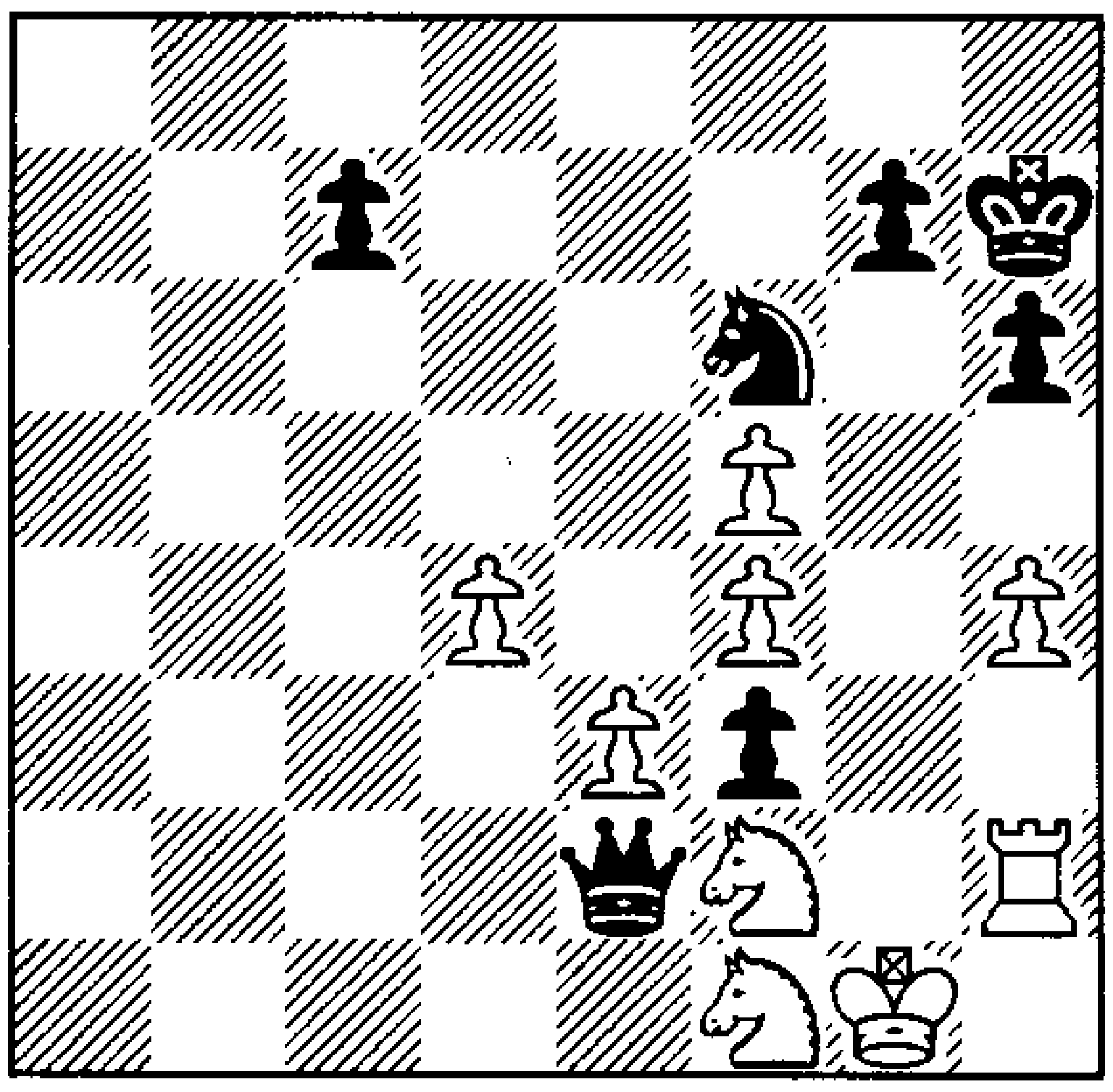
'A new threat of mate in a few moves, commencing with 36...♗b5, which compels White to sacrifice the exchange.' (Alekhine)

36 ♖b8 ♗b5 37 ♖xb5 ♕xb5 38 g4

With the faint hope of including the sickly h1-bishop in the game. But another surprise is in store for White.

38...♘f3+! 39 ♗xf3 exf3 40 gxf5 (forced: 40 g5 ♘g4 41 ♘xg4 fxg4 wins) **40...♕e2!!**

Creating a problem-like position. White is in zugzwang: any reply by him leads to immediate defeat.



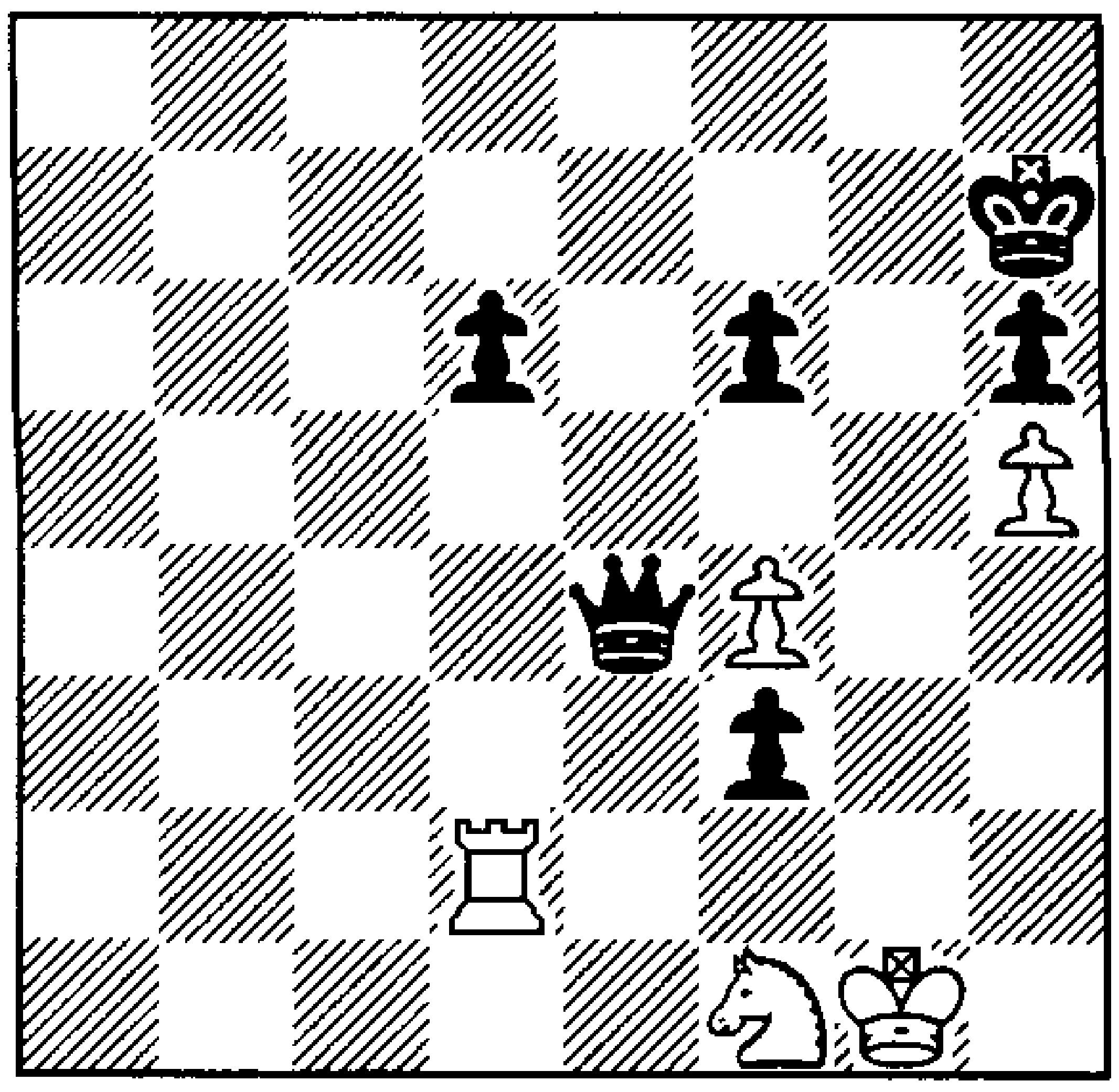
41 d5

After 41 ♘h3 (41 ♖h3 ♘g4!) 41...♘g4! 42 ♖xe2 fxe2! a third black queen would have appeared on the board.

41...♔g8! (but not 41...h5? 42 ♘h3! intending 43 ♘g5+) **42 h5 ♔h7** (a demonstration of strength) **43 e4**

The only move, but even it leads to a lost ending.

43...♘xe4 44 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 45 d6 cxd6 46 f6 gxf6 47 ♖d2



47...♕e2!

'A pretty finish, worthy of this fine game.' (Alekhine)

48 ♖xe2 fxe2 49 ♔f2 exf1♕+ 50 ♔xf1 ♔g7 51 ♔f2 ♔f7 52 ♔e3 ♔e6 53 ♔e4 d5+ 0-1

There's no denying that this is an excellent present for your 30th birthday!

After this dressing-down Bogoljubow was depressed for a time, but on the other hand the 'great Akiba' roused himself, as was shown two months later in Vienna 1922: 1. Rubinstein – 11½ out of 14; 2. Tartakower – 10; 3. H. Wolf – 9½; 4-6. Alekhine, Maróczy and Tarrasch – 9; 7. Grünfeld – 8; 8. Réti – 7½; 9. Bogoljubow – 6½ etc.

It would appear that the Russian champion became rather tired towards the end of the year. Take a look at his portrait, painted by the Vienna press: 'Alekhine is the embodiment of nervousness. The facial expression of this tall, elegant young man is constantly changing; the impulsive movements of his hands, with which he first passes impetuously through his light-gingery hair, then quickly picks up pieces that have been removed from the board – all this reflects the intense, passionate working of his mind... After his every move he quickly stands up, with rapid, impetuous steps his elegant figure moves from board to board, and with a keen glance he takes in the positions in the games. If his opponent succeeds in putting him in a difficult position with an unexpected manoeuvre, he becomes irritable and impatient; the slightest noise gets on his nerves; his bright eyes are fixed searchingly on his opponent, as though with the aim of penetrating into his thoughts – and when he finds a good reply, a triumphant smile lights up his face. The board at which Alekhine is playing is always surrounded by a dense crowd of spectators.'

From Vienna, Alekhine departed to Paris, where he settled among the numerous Russian émigrés...

From Carlsbad to Baden-Baden

The most important tournaments of 1923 were in May in Carlsbad, where 'everyone' played, apart from Capa and Lasker, and in July in Mährisch-Ostrau, where 'everyone' played, apart from Capa and Alekhine. One general feature of these tournaments was the failure of Rubinstein, who began to drop out of the circle of contenders for the crown. In Mährisch-Ostrau the winner was Lasker, and in Carlsbad there were three: 1-3. Alekhine, Bogoljubow and Maróczy – 11½ out of 17; 4-5. Grünfeld and Réti – 10½; 6-7. Nimzowitsch and Treybal – 10 etc.

However, the moral winner of Carlsbad can safely be regarded as Alekhine: he defeated his three nearest rivals: Bogoljubow, Maróczy and Grünfeld, and he was denied clear first place only by unexpected losses to Treybal and Yates. In addition he won two brilliancy prizes!

Game 120

E.Grünfeld-A.Alekhine

Carlsbad 1923

Queen's Gambit D64

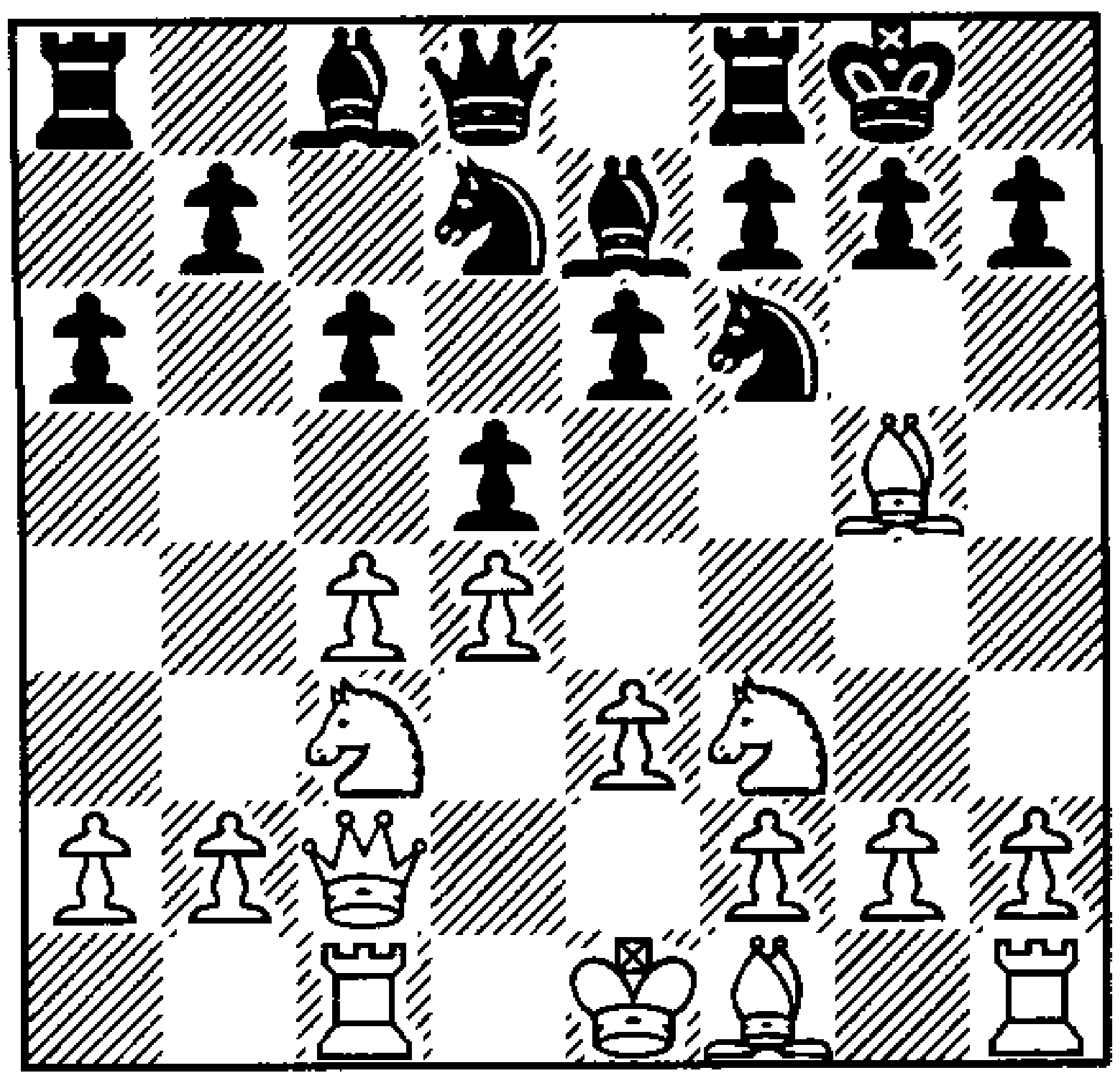
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 ♘f3 ♘bd7 6 e3 0-0 7 ♖c1 c6 (a *tabiya* of the Orthodox Defence; for 7...a6, cf. *Games No.105 and 128*) **8 ♕c2 a6**

Here Alekhine makes a valuable and instructive comment:

'In my opinion better than 8...h6, upon which White could have replied advantageously 9 ♗f4! ♖e8 (if 9...♘e4, then 10 ♗d3! f5 11 h4 followed at need by g2-g3 and ♘e5 with advantage to White) 10 ♗d3 dxc4 11 ♗xc4 b5 12 ♗d3 a6 13 a4! The game Alekhine-Teichmann (Carlsbad 1923) unfolded itself in the following way: 13...♗b7 14 0-0 ♖c8 15 ♕b3 ♕b6 16 ♘e5 ♖ed8 17 ♘g6! ♗f8 18 ♘xf8 ♘xf8 19 ♘e4 ♘xe4 20 ♗xe4 ♘d7 21 ♗d6! ♘f6 22 ♗c5 ♕c7 23 ♗f3 a5, and White by playing for example 24 ♖fe1 or 24 ♖c2, instead of accepting the pawn sacrificed, which only led to a draw, would have retained a winning position.

'Every international tournament brings a fresh and sufficient line of play for Black. In the Mährisch-Ostrau tournament of 1923 Wolf played against the great theorist Grünfeld the simple continuation: 8...♘e4 9 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 10 ♗d3 (10 ♘xe4 obviously leads to nothing, for if White captures the pawn on e4 he loses his b-pawn) 10...♘xc3, with a very defendable game which resulted in a draw.' Then Black plays ...dxc4, ...b7-b6, ...♗b7 etc.

It was because of the typical relieving manoeuvre 8...♘e4! that White gradually came to reject 7 ♖c1 c6 8 ♕c2 in favour of the immediate 7 ♕c2.



9 a3

The struggle for a tempo. 9 a4 was also played (*Game No.121*), but the Capablanca-

Alekhine match (1927) showed that 9 cxd5!? is more promising (*Game No.105*).

9...h6 10 ♗h4

Also after 10 ♗f4 good is 10...♖e8 11 ♗d3 dxc4 12 ♗xc4 b5 followed by ...♗b7 and ...c6-c5 (Alekhine-Capablanca, Buenos Aires 4th and 26th matchgames 1927).

10...♖e8!

'An important improvement on the line of play adopted by Maróczy against Grünfeld in the Vienna tournament of 1922. This game continued 10...dxc4 11 ♗xc4 b5 12 ♗a2 ♗b7 13 ♗b1 ♖e8 14 ♘e5! ♘f8 15 0-0, and White has far the better game.' (Alekhine)

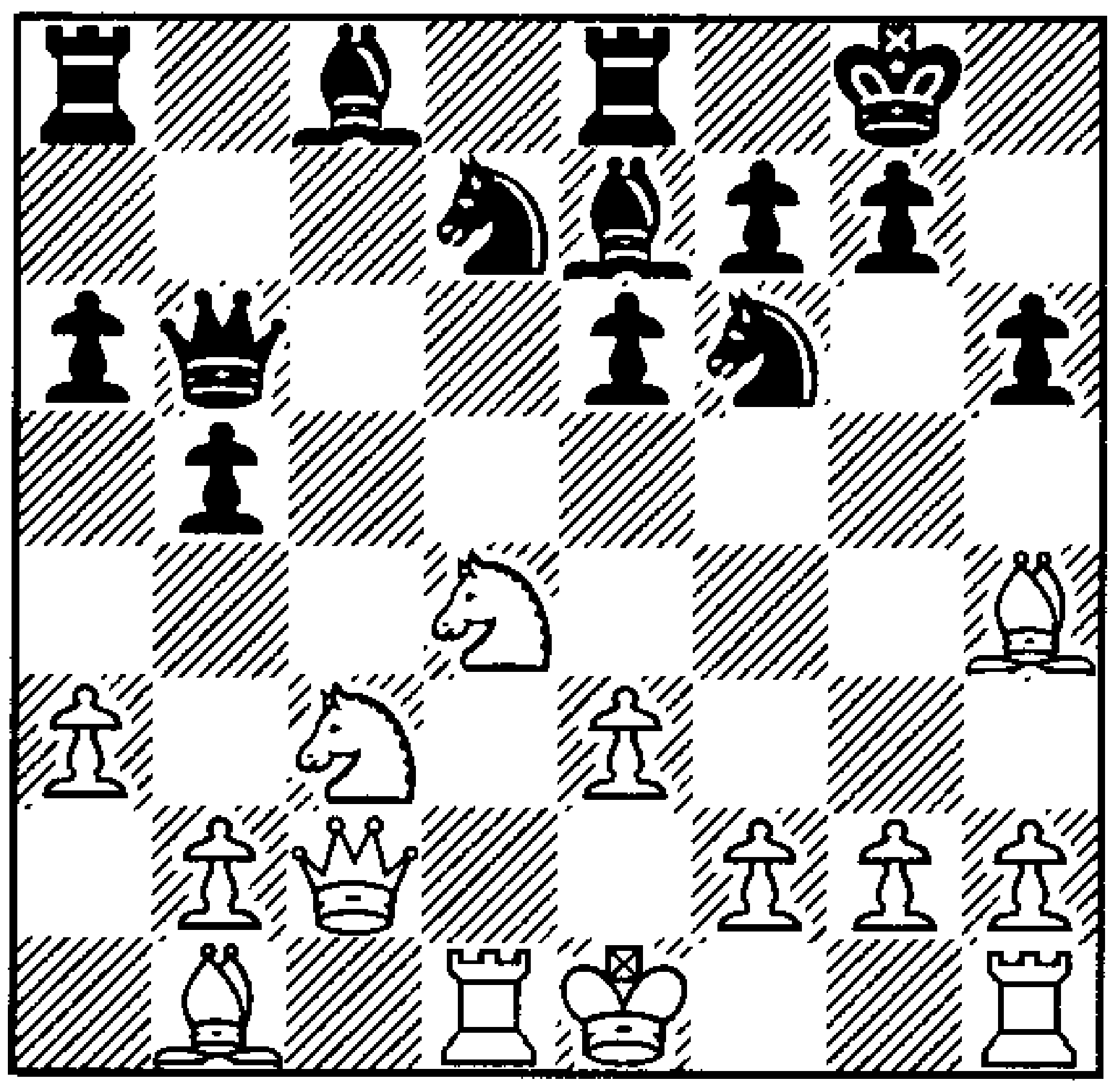
11 ♗d3

Little is changed by 11 h3 dxc4 12 ♗xc4 b5 13 ♗a2 c5. If 11 ♖d1, then 11...b5 is good (*Game No.126*). But White can consider transposing into the Carlsbad structure by 11 cxd5!? exd5 (11...♘xd5 12 ♗g3!) 12 ♗d3.

11...dxc4 12 ♗xc4 b5 13 ♗a2 c5 14 ♖d1?!

Also unfavourable is 14 dxc5 ♘xc5 15 ♗b1 (15 0-0 ♕d3!) 15...♗b7! 16 ♗xf6?! ♗xf6 17 ♕h7+ ♔f8 18 ♘xb5 axb5 19 ♖xc5 ♗xb2 (Alekhine). However, 14 0-0 cxd4 (14...♕b6!?) 15 exd4 is more natural, as played in Carlsbad 1923 by Réti and Grünfeld against Teichmann.

14...cxd4 15 ♘xd4 (this would appear to involve a tactical oversight) **15...♕b6 16 ♗b1**



16...♗b7! 17 0-0

'White had apparently been intending 17 ♘dxb5?! axb5? 18 ♖xd7 winning, but here he noticed the refutation – 17...♕c6!! 18 ♘d4 (forced) 18...♕xg2 with a strong counterattack.' (Alekhine)

17...♖ac8

Black has comfortably completed his development and is now threatening 18...♗e4 or 18...♘e4.

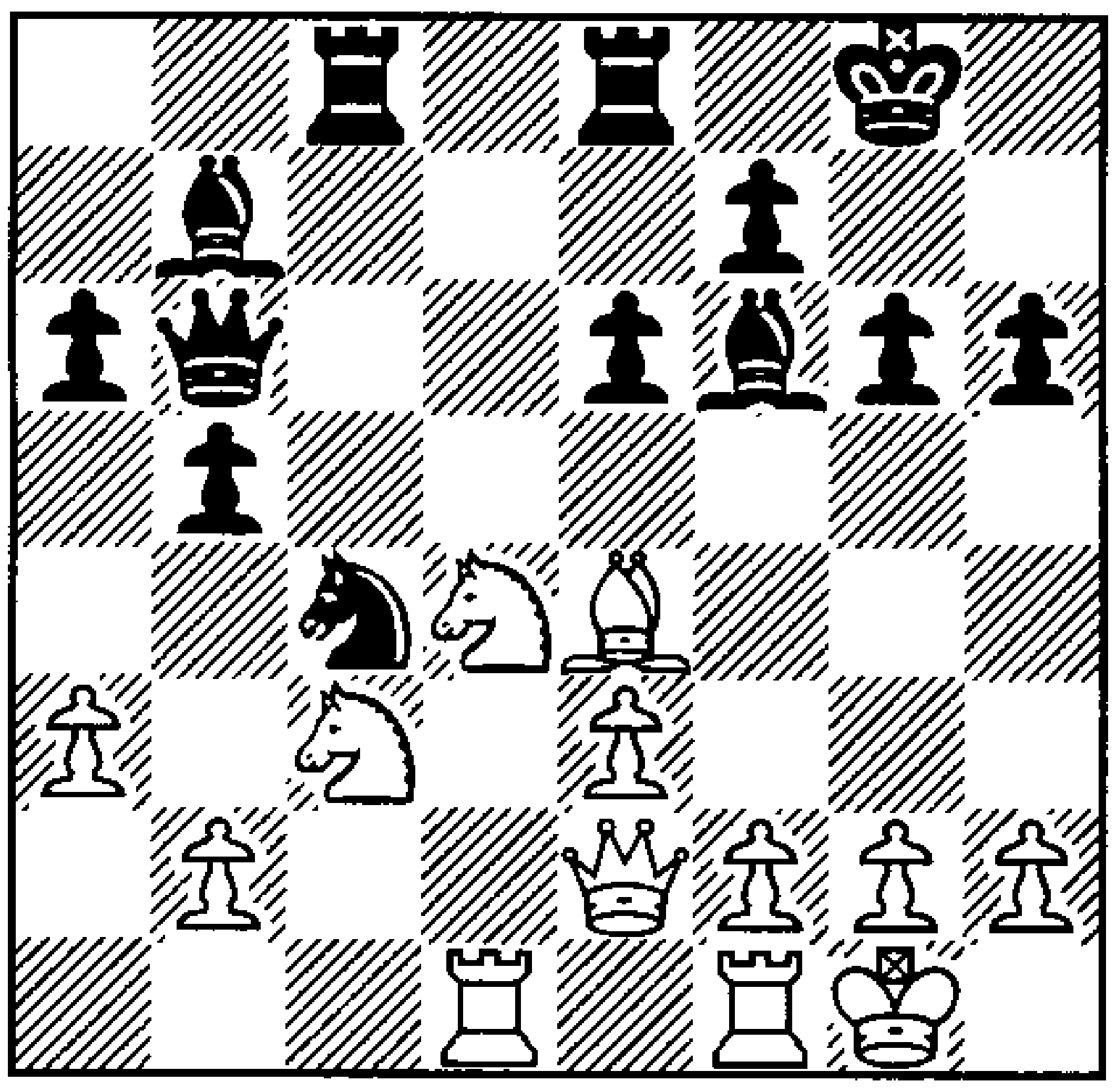
18 ♕d2 (inferior is 18 ♕e2?! ♗xa3 19 ♘cxb5 ♗b4!) **18...♘e5!**

'This knight will occupy the square c4, thereby fixing the weakness of the queenside, induced by 9 a3.' (Alekhine)

19 ♗xf6

With the intention of exchanging the dangerous b7-bishop. However, according to Alekhine, all White's trickery is no longer sufficient to equalise.

19...♗xf6 20 ♕c2 g6 (not so much a defence against ♕h7+ as a preparation for ...♗g7) **21 ♕e2 ♘c4 22 ♗e4!**



22...♗g7!

Avoiding a subtle trap: after 22...♘xa3?! Grünfeld had prepared 23 ♕f3! ♗xe4 24 ♘xe4 ♗xd4 25 exd4 and 26 ♘f6+, winning the exchange.

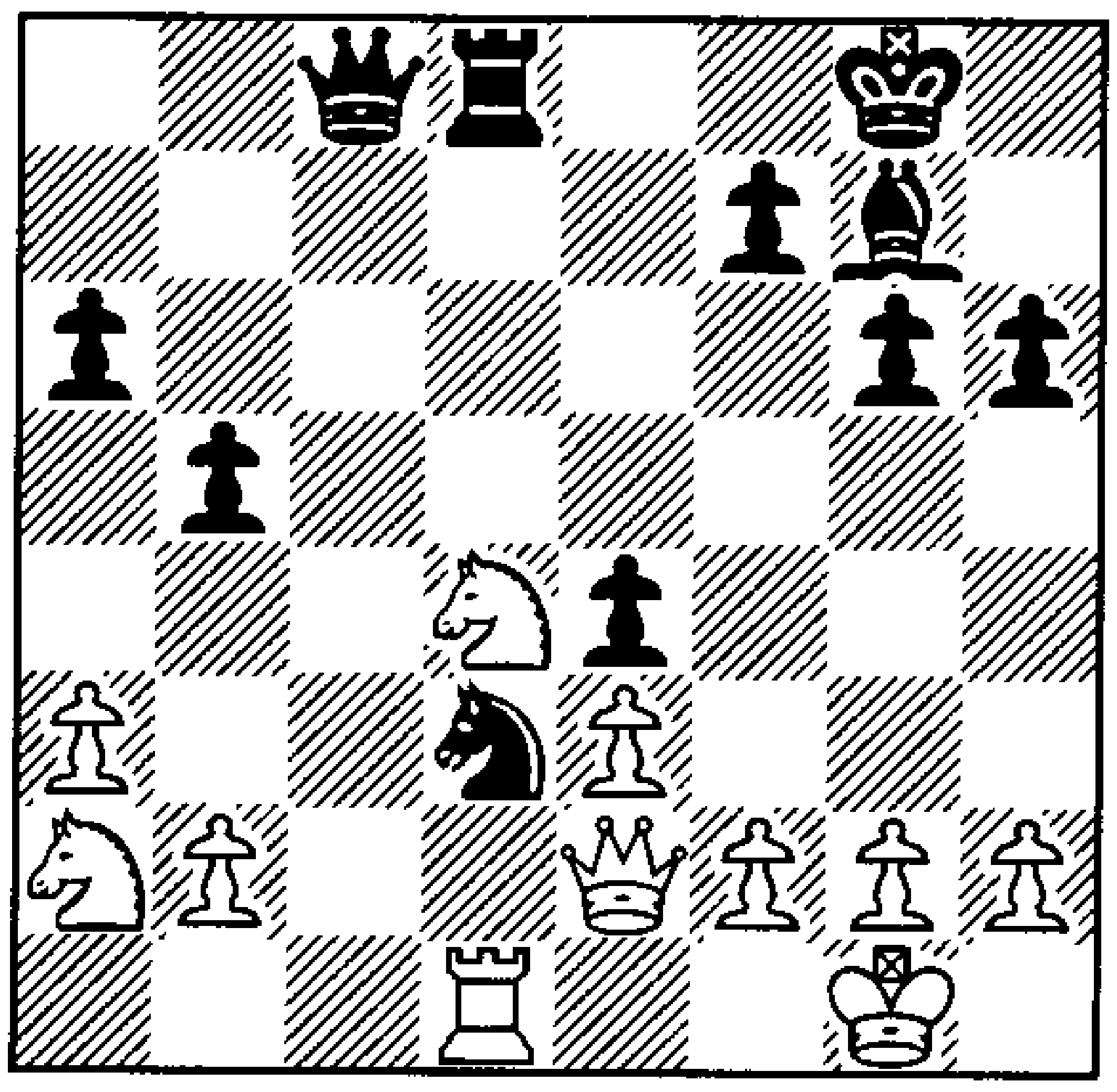
23 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 (threatening 24...♘xa3) **24 ♖c1 e5!**

'This advance of the e-pawn will give Black's knight a new outpost on d3, still more irksome for the opponent than its present position.' (Alekhine)

25 ♘b3 e4 (again threatening ...♘xa3) **26 ♘d4 ♖ed8!** (gradually supporting the knight's position at d3) **27 ♖fd1 ♘e5 28 ♘a2?!**

'After this move, which removes the knight from the field of action, White is definitely lost. Comparatively better was 28 f3, upon which Black would have continued 28...exf3 29 gxf3 ♘c4 with attacking chances on both flanks.' (Alekhine)

28...♘d3 29 ♖xc8 ♕xc8



30 f3?

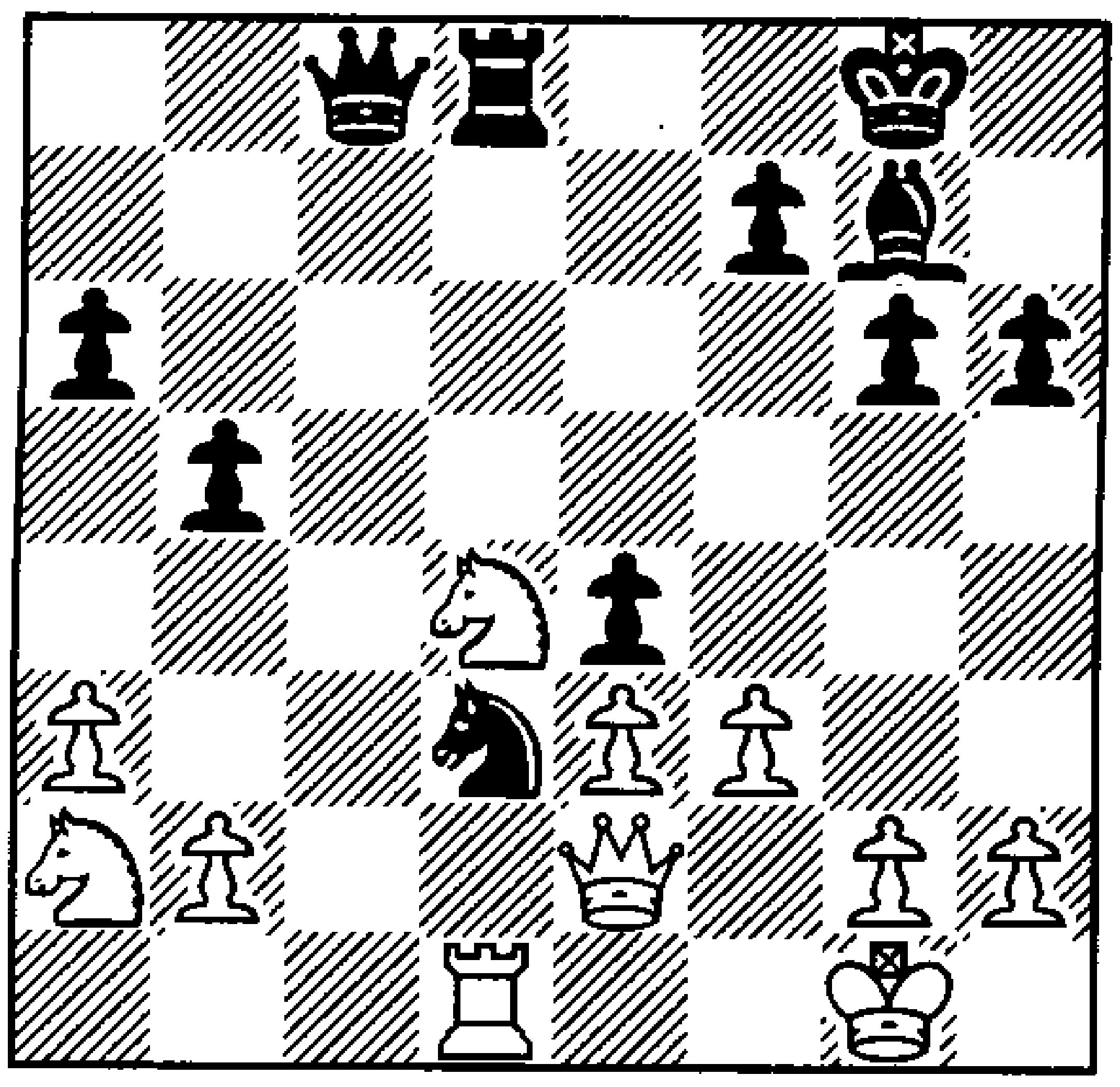
Completely outplayed by his mighty opponent, in desperation Grünfeld tries to undermine the d3-outpost as soon as possible: this knight is just too strong, paralysing White's entire game and creating the preconditions for dangerous combinations.

However, the best chance was 30 ♘c3 f5 31 f3. According to Alekhine, 'Black would have gained the victory by the same sacrifice which occurred in the actual game: 31...♖xd4! 32 exd4 ♗xd4+ 33 ♔f1 ♘f4 34 ♕d2 ♕c4+ 35 ♘e2 e3! 36 ♕e1 (*? – G. K.*) 36...♗xb2 37 ♖d8+ ♔f7 38 ♕d1 ♗xa3! 39 ♕d7+ ♗e7 40 ♕e8+ ♔f6 41 ♕h8+ ♔g5 42 h4+ ♔h5 43 g4+ fxg4 44 ♕e5+ g5!! winning.'

But Kotov objects: 'This pretty variation is nevertheless incorrect. The interposition of 36 b3!, which was not anticipated by Alekhine, leads to a win not for Black, but White (*for example: 36...exd2 37 bxc4 ♘xe2 38 ♔xe2 bxc4 39 ♖xd2 – G. K.*). Thus 30 ♘c3 was the correct continuation, giving a roughly equal game.'

Let us also correct Kotov. How, with such a powerful knight at d3, can White have an equal game?! The composed 31...♗xd4! (instead of 31...♖xd4?) 32 exd4 ♕c4! 33 d5 ♕c5+ 34 ♔f1 ♘f4 would have retained an enormous advantage. If 35 ♕e1 ♘xd5 36 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 White is simply a pawn down, whereas after 35 ♕d2 (or 35 ♕f2 e3 36 ♕g3 ♕c4+) 35...e3 his position quickly collapses: 36 ♕e1 ♕c4+ 37 ♔g1 e2! 38 ♖d2 ♕c5+ 39 ♔h1 ♖e8 40 d6 (40 h3 ♕e3 41 d6 ♕xd2) 40...♕f2!!, or 36 ♕d4 e2+!! 37 ♘xe2 ♖xd5 38 ♕xc5 ♖xd1+ 39 ♔f2 ♘d3+, and the knight is again on the magic square!

But in the game Alekhine's 'main' combination worked – vivid, like a flash of lightning.



30...♖xd4! 31 fxe4

Here the rook is immune: if 31 exd4 Black wins by 31...♗xd4+ 32 ♔f1 ♘f4! 33 ♕xe4 (or 33 ♕d2 ♕c4+ 34 ♔e1 e3!) 33...♕c4+ 34 ♔e1 ♘xg2+ 35 ♔d2 ♗e3+.

31...♘f4!!

The crowning stroke! Is it worth considering 31...♖xe4 32 ♖xd3 (32 ♕xd3 ♕e6) 32...♖c4 or 31...♖d8 32 ♖xd3 ♖xd3 33 ♕xd3 ♗xb2, if White's sufferings can be curtailed instantly?!

32 exf4 ♕c4!!

Diversion – one of the spectacular tactical devices in which all the games of the fourth champion abound.

33 ♕xc4 (otherwise the knight at a2 is lost)

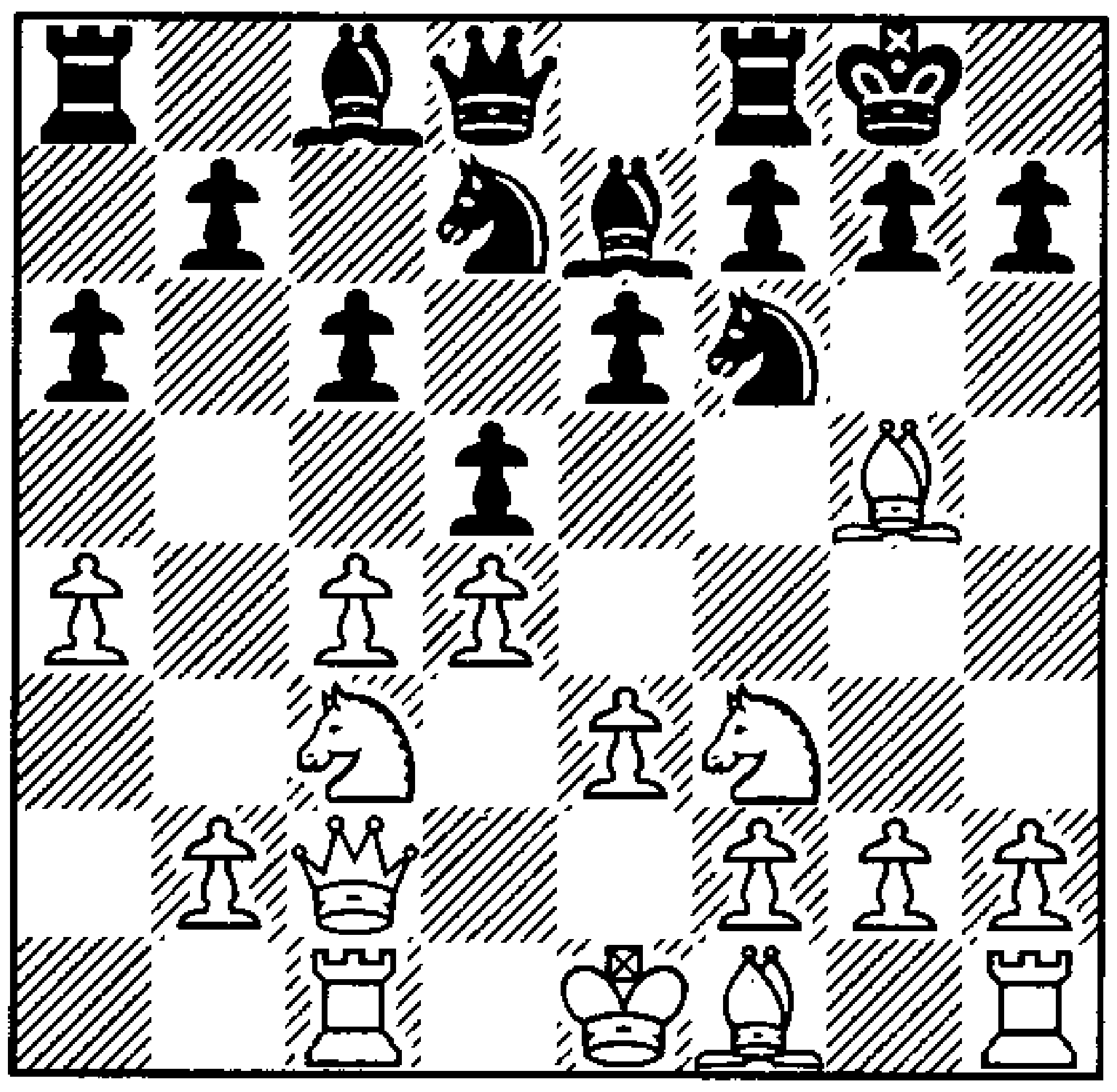
33...♖xd1+ 34 ♕f1 ♗d4+ 0-1

A move before mate White resigned. A deserved brilliancy prize, wouldn't you agree?

Curiously enough, the very next day Alekhine upheld the same opening variation with White, and against the great Rubinstein... And he earned himself another brilliancy prize!

Game 121
A.Alekhine-A.Rubinstein
Carlsbad 1923
Queen's Gambit D64

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 ♗e7 5 ♗g5 ♘bd7 6 e3 0-0 7 ♖c1 (7 ♕c2!?) **7...c6 8 ♕c2 a6** (8...♘e4!?) **9 a4**



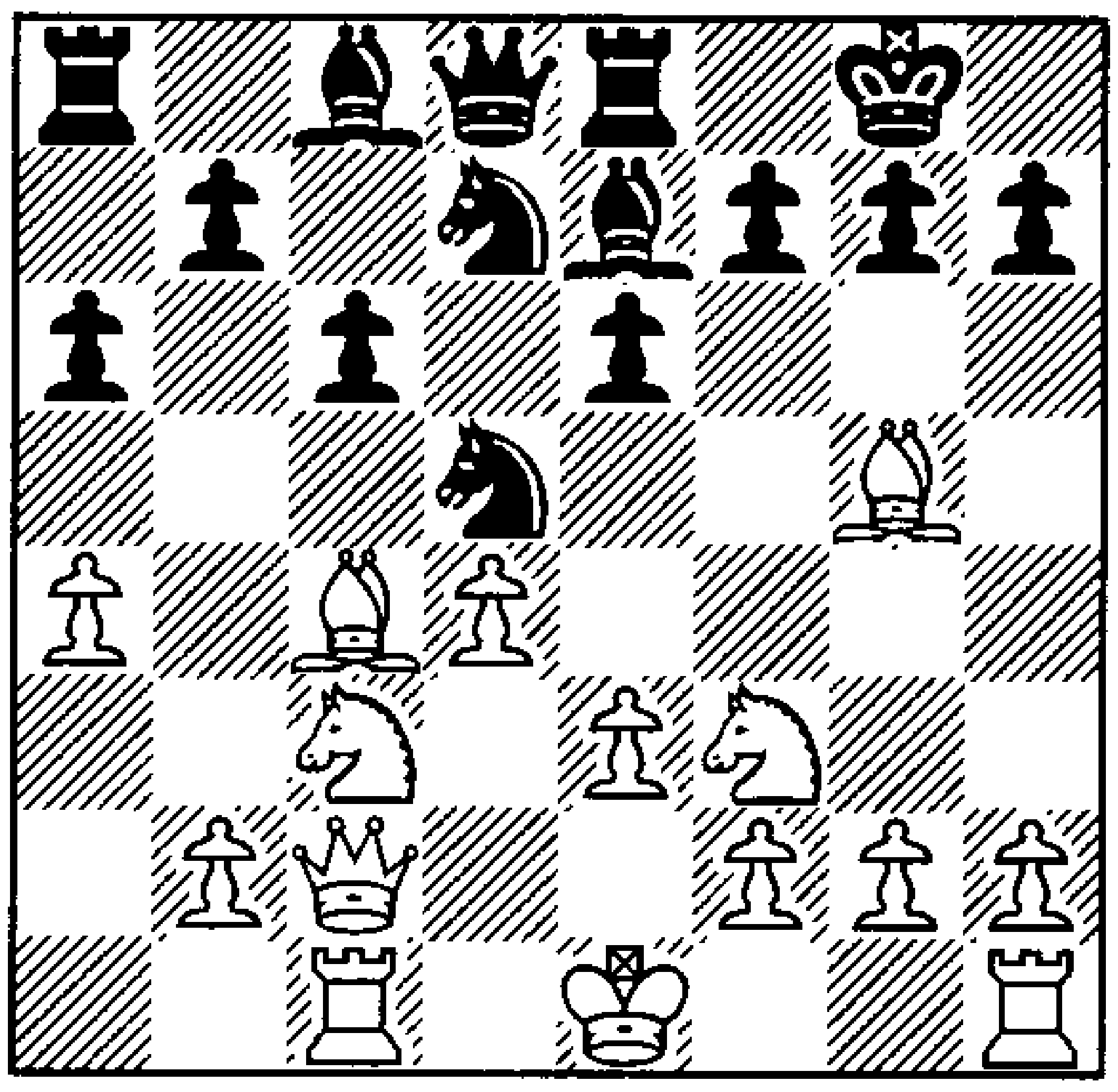
'As this identical variation had yielded me a win the previous evening against Grünfeld, who played 9 a3 here, I wished to avoid fighting against the defence which I considered then, and still consider now, the best. This is the reason which decided me in favour of a2-a4, a move which Rubinstein, my present adversary, had adopted against me, without conspicuous success, in a similar position in the Hastings Tournament of 1922. The game continued as follows: 8...h6 9 ♗h4 (9 ♗f4!) 9...a6 10 a4 c5 11 ♗d3 cxd4 12 exd4 dxc4 13 ♗xc4 ♘b6 14 ♗a2 ♘bd5 15 ♗b1 ♘b4 16 ♕e2 ♗d7 17 0-0 ♗c6 18 ♖fd1 ♖c8 19 ♘e5 ♘fd5 20 ♗g3 ♗g5 21 f4! ♗h4 22 ♘xc6 ♖xc6 23 ♘xd5 ♖xc1 24 ♖xc1 ♘xd5 25 ♕e4 g6 26 ♗xh4 ♕xh4 27 f5? ♕g5! and Black wins easily.'

9...♖e8?!

Or 9...h6?! 10 ♗f4! But, according to Alekhine, 'the move 9 a4 cannot pretend to yield any advantage, since Black can answer it by 9...♘e4! with greater force than on the preceding move, White's queenside being now slightly weak.'

10 ♗d3 dxc4 11 ♗xc4 ♘d5

'We now realise the idea conceived by Black – a fusion of the new defensive system (...a7-a6) with the old system (...dxc4 and ...♘d5), in the hope of thus profiting by the weakening of the square b4 created by the advance of White's a-pawn.' (Alekhine)



12 ♗f4!

A move that characterises Alekhine's understanding of the problem of the centre. For the sake of opening lines and including another pawn in the battle for the e5-square, he is ready even to spoil his pawn structure.' (Kotov)

The idea of the d4 and f4 'horns' was also employed in a similar situation by Botvinnik – against Ragozin (Leningrad 1930) and Menchik (Hastings 1934/35). His commentary is no less interesting: 'White agrees to give up his bishop at f4 for the knight. On a dogmatic evaluation all the advantages will be on Black's side: the two bishops and a spoiled pawn formation for the opponent. But a concrete approach shows that White has a considerable lead in development and the opportunity for play in the centre, and these factors outweigh the others.'

12...♘xf4 13 exf4 c5

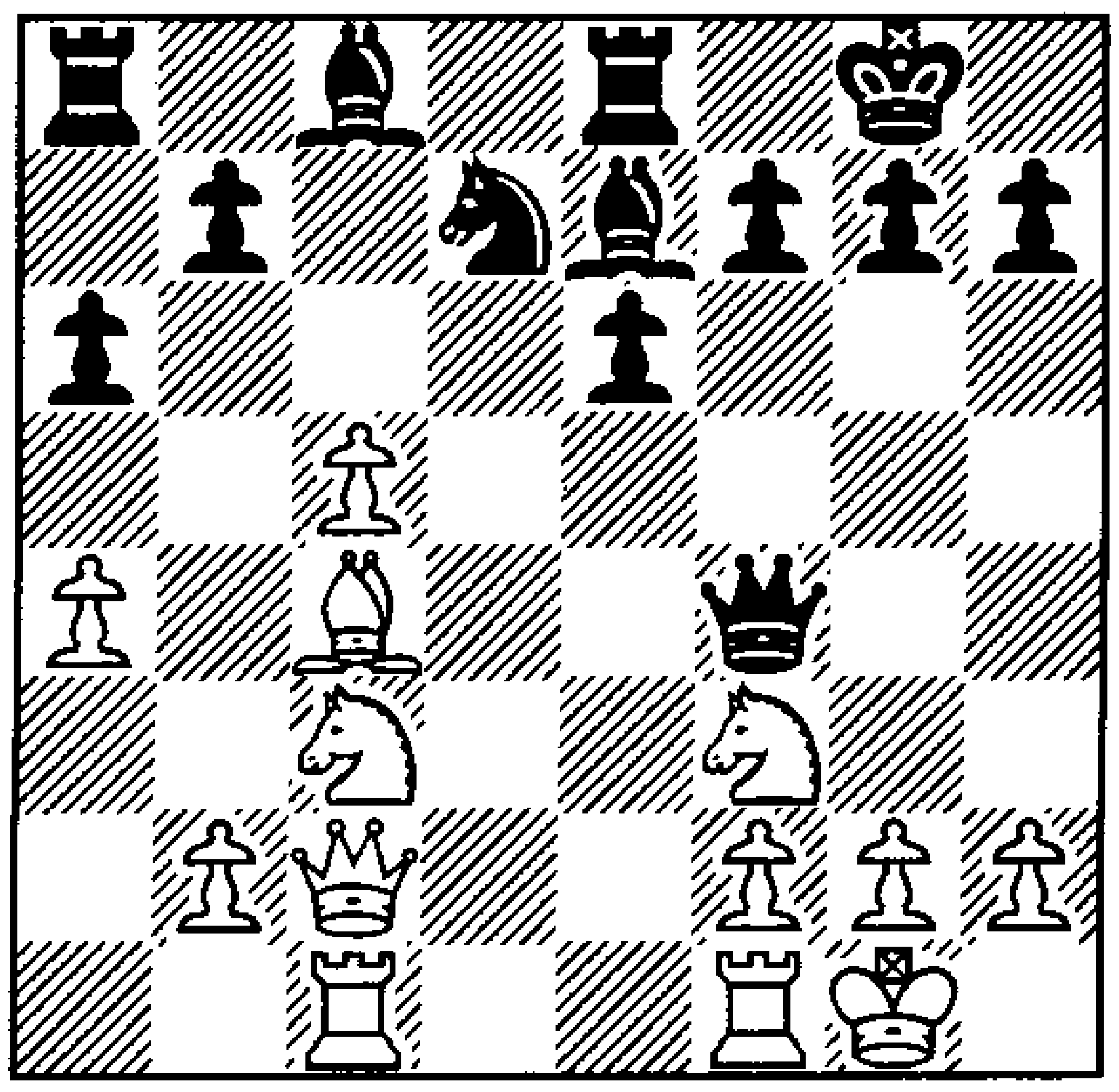
'This move, which goes against the general principle of not opening up fresh lines to a better-developed opponent, is dictated by the wish to eliminate White's troublesome pawn on f4.' (Alekhine) After 13...♘b6 14 ♗d3 White would have retained some advantage.

14 dxc5 (but not 14 0-0? cxd4 15 ♘xd4 ♘b6) **14...♕c7 15 0-0!**

In the event of the mechanical 15 g3 Black would have solved all his problems: 15...♕c6 16 ♗e2 e5! etc.

15...♕xf4

'The capture of the c-pawn would also be insufficient to maintain equality, e.g. 15...♗xc5 16 ♗d3 ♘f6 17 ♘e4! or 15...♘xc5 16 ♘e5.' (Alekhine)



16 ♘e4!

This pawn sacrifice is the only way for White to maintain his initiative and exploit his lead in the development. If 16 ♘e2 ♕h6 17 b4, then 17... a5!

16...♘xc5

'If 16...♗xc5 17 ♘eg5 g6 (forced, since if 17...♘f8 White wins by 18 ♗d3) 18 ♖fe1! ♘f6 19 g3 ♕d6 20 ♖ed1 ♕e7 21 ♘e5 with an overwhelming attack for White. The text move simplifies the game and allows Black some chances of salvation.' (Alekhine) However, 'better is 18...♘f8! (leaving the f6-square for the queen) with a perfectly defensible position.' (Kotov)

17 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 18 ♗d3 b6 (if 18...♗d6, then 19 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 20 ♖fd1 with the threat of ♖d4) **19 ♗xh7+ ♔h8?**

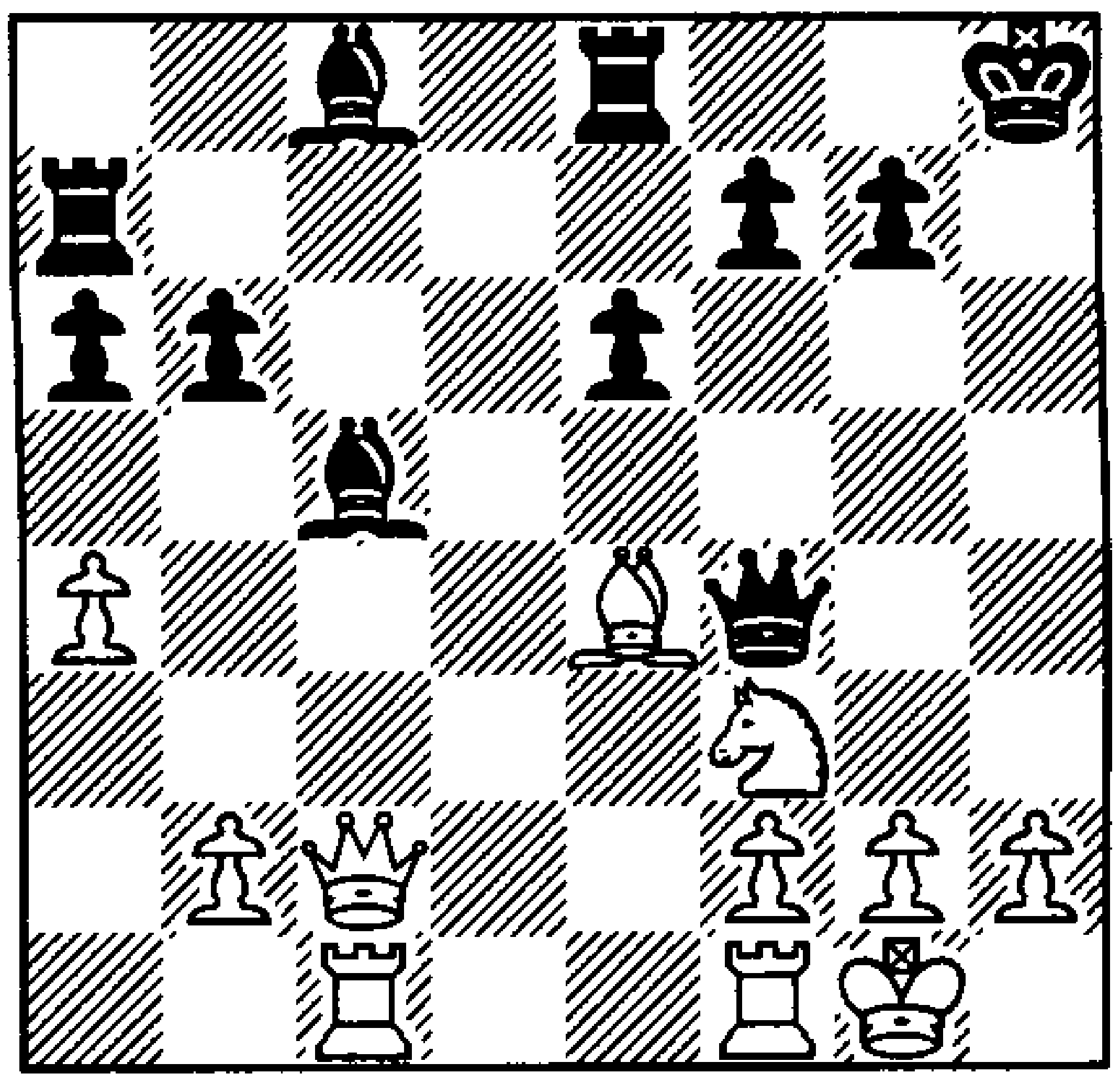
In Alekhine's opinion, the decisive mistake, since 'after 19...♔f8! it would have been very difficult for White to show how he could win, despite his positional superiority.'

20 ♗e4 ♖a7?!

Of course, 20...♖b8 was better, 'although in this case White would have obtained a decisive superiority by the following lines of play: 21 g3 ♕d6 22 ♖fd1 ♕e7 23 ♘e5 ♕c7 24 ♕c3! a5 25 ♘c6 and 26 ♕f3, winning for White, or 21 g3 ♕f6 22 b4 ♗d6 (else 23 ♕c7! follows) 23 ♖fd1 ♕e7 24 ♗c6 ♖d8 25 ♖d4 g6 26 ♕d2! ♔g7 27 ♖d1 and White wins.' (Alekhine)

Excuse me, but here there is the sobering 27...♗xb4!, and so instead of 27 ♖d1? the computer suggests 27 ♖h4! e5 (27...♖h8 28 ♖xh8 ♔xh8 29 ♖d1! ♗c7 30 ♕h6+ ♔g8 31 ♘g5 etc.) 28 ♕h6+ ♔f6 29 ♖e1 winning.

On the other hand, instead of 25...g6?! Kotov recommended 25...♔g8! 'and Black could still have defended.' I think that after 26 ♖cd1! this would have been with great difficulty: 26...♗c7 27 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 28 ♘e5 or 26...e5 27 ♘xe5! ♕xe5 28 ♕d2, regaining the piece and remaining a pawn up.

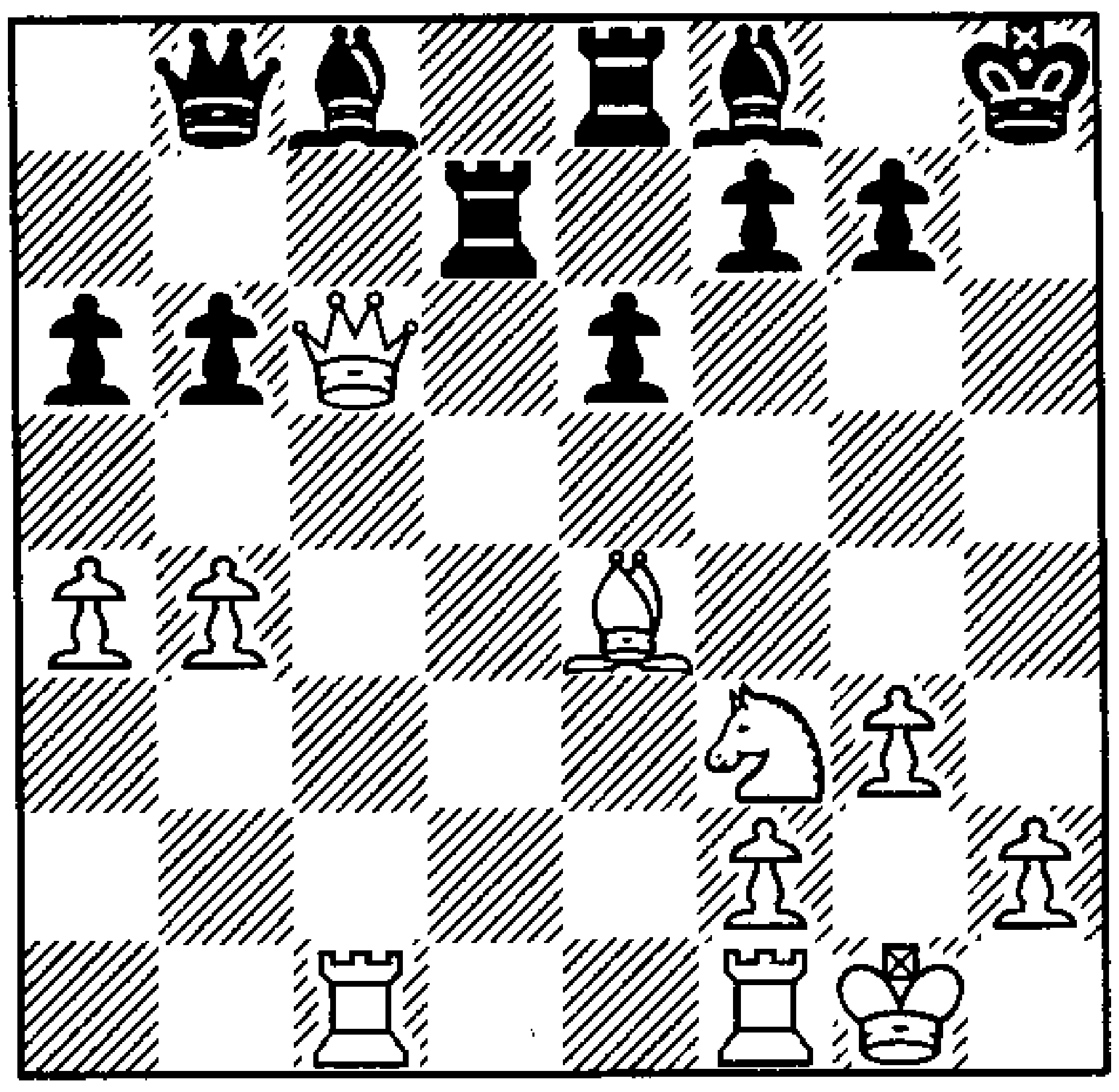


21 b4! (now White wins not only by force, but also very prettily) **21...♗f8** (21...♗xb4? 22 ♕xc8!) **22 ♕c6 ♖d7 23 g3! ♕b8**

After 23...♕d6, according to Alekhine White would have won by both 24 ♕c4 ♔g8 (24...♕e7 25 ♘e5! ♖d6 26 ♗c6!) 25 ♗c6 ♖c7 26 ♖fd1 ♕e7 27 ♕d3! and 24 ♖fd1 ♕xd1+ (24...♕xc6 25 ♗xc6 ♖xd1+ 26 ♖xd1 ♖e7 27 ♖d8) 25 ♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 26 ♔g2 ♗d7 27 ♕xb6 ♗xa4 28 ♕xa6 ♗d7 29 ♘g5 ♔g8 30 ♕e2.

According to Kotov, '24 ♖fd1 is unconvincing because of 24...♕e7! with possibilities of a defence,' but, in my opinion, after 25 ♘e5! these possibilities are close to zero.

However, after 23...♕b8 Black, who is pinned to the edge of the board, is struck by a sudden hurricane:



24 ♘g5! (with the threat of 25 ♘xf7+!) **24...♖ed8 25 ♗g6!!**

The swiftest way of switching the queen to the h-file! The computer finds this stroke literally in seconds. The insipid 25 ♗g2?! is parried by the same move 25...♕e5.

25...♕e5

Rubinstein decides to give up the exchange. If 25...fxg6 (25...♔g8 26 ♕e4!; 25...♗b7 26 ♕c4!), then 26 ♕e4! ♗d6 27 ♕h4+ ♔g8 28 ♕h7+ ♔f8 29 ♕h8+ ♔e7 30 ♕xg7+ ♔e8 31 ♕g8+ ♗f8 32 ♕xg6+ ♔e7 33 ♕xe6 mate.

26 ♘xf7+ ♖xf7 27 ♗xf7 ♕f5 28 ♖fd1! (in contrast to its heroic white opponent, the c8-bishop perishes without making a single move) **28...♖xd1+ 29 ♖xd1 ♕xf7 30 ♕xc8 ♔h7 31 ♕xa6 ♕f3 32 ♕d3+! 1-0**

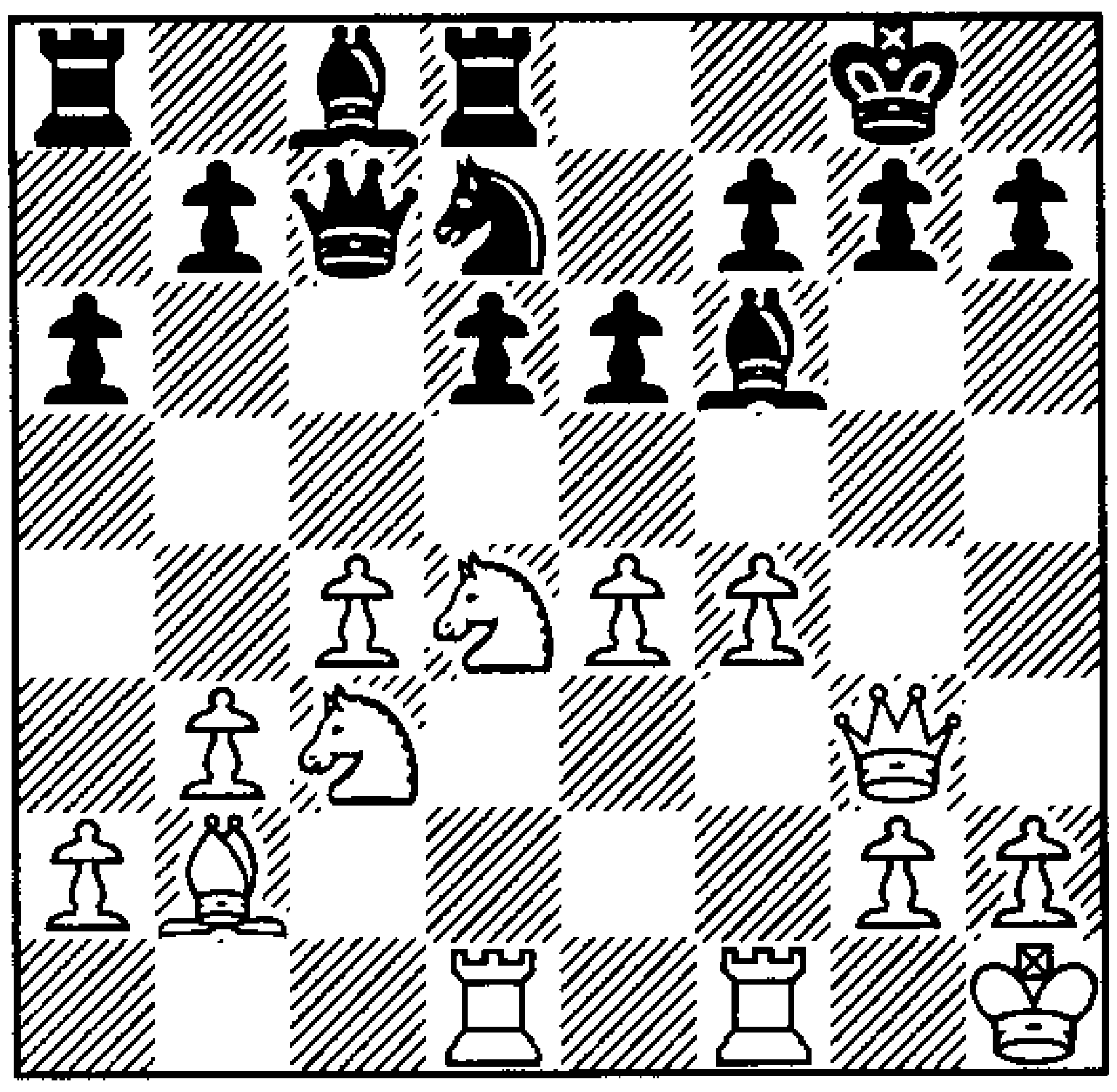
It was in Carlsbad 1923, in reply to a question by a Viennese journalist, that for the first time Alekhine expounded his creative credo: 'I do not play chess – I fight at chess. Therefore I willingly combine the tactical with the strategic, the fantastic with the scientific, the combinative with the positional, and I aim to respond to the demands of each given position...' Chigorin, too, would probably have been happy to sign his name to this...

Here, incidentally, is another attractive example of combining the fantastic with the scientific, when a brilliant attack crowned some a great deal of preparatory work.

Game 122

A.Alekhine-F.Sämisch

Exhibition game, Berlin 1923



16...b6?

'The decisive mistake; Black should have played 16...♔h8. But can Sämisch be reproached for this move? – after all, White wins with a combination which could have been foreseen only by a player possessing exceptional combinative flair.' (Kotov)

17 f5! ♗e5?!

An attempt to strengthen the position by ...♘f6 (after the queen moves). No better was 17...♗xd4 18 ♖xd4 ♘e5 19 f6 ♘g6 20 ♗a3! (Alekhine), or 17...e5 18 ♘d5 ♕b7 19 ♘e6!, but 17...♖e8 was more tenacious (Kotov).

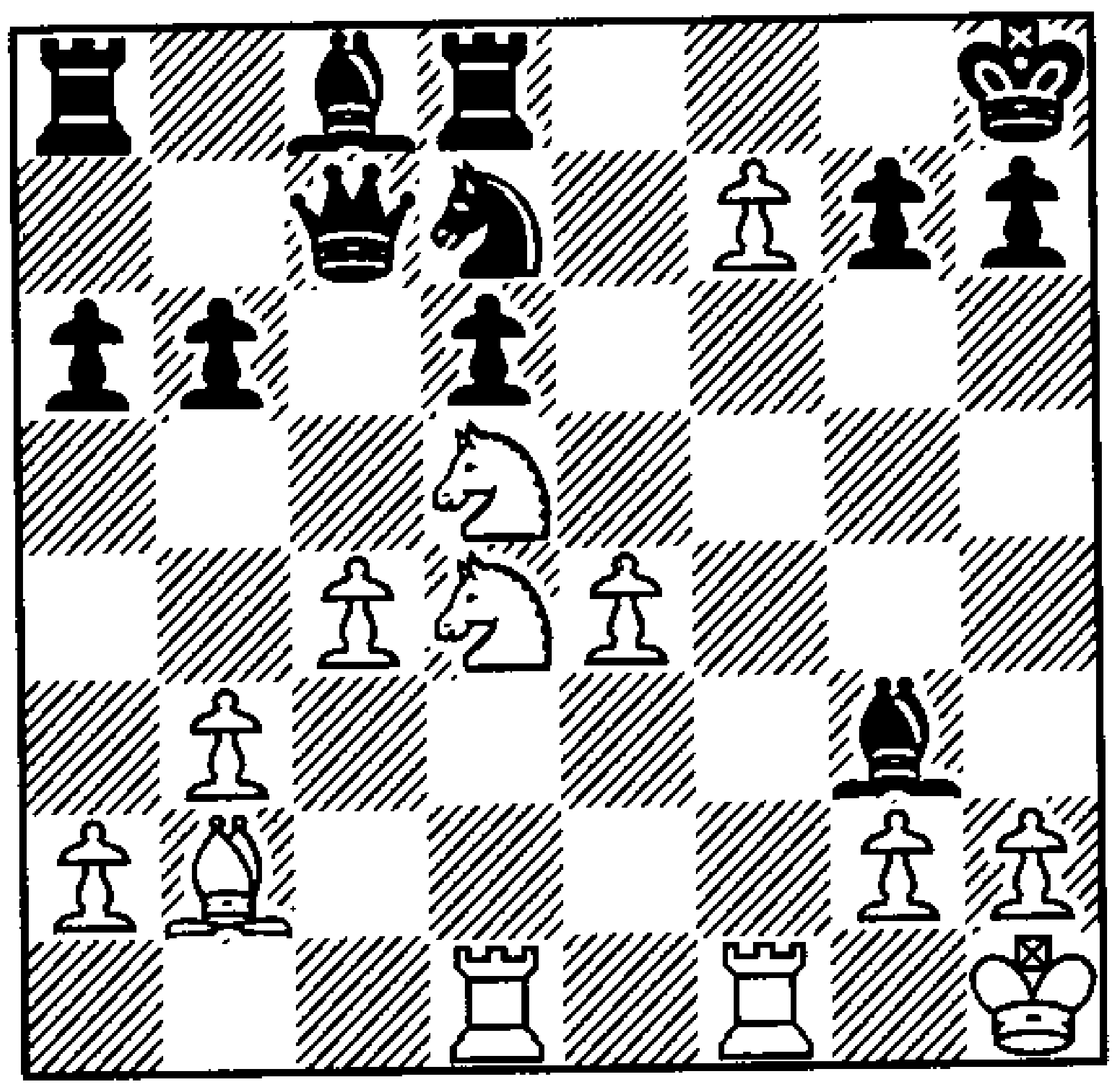
18 fxe6!!

A cold shower: sometimes the energy of the pieces is more important than a whole queen! Of course, White has no reason to play 18 ♕h3 ♘f6!, especially as 19 fxe6 fxe6 20 ♘xe6? is not possible on account of 20...♕e7.

18...♗xg3 (18...fxe6 19 ♘xe6 wins) **19 exf7+ ♔h8 20 ♘d5!! 1-0**

'The whole point of the sacrifice! 20 ♘e6 would not be so good, because of 20...♕b8 21 ♘d5 ♗e5 and Black could still defend himself, whereas after the text move he remains defenceless.' (Alekhine)

And here, with an extra queen and seemingly not a single defence, Black resigned! Apparently Sämisch flinched under the hail of diverse threats... However, Alekhine's analysis shows that his somewhat premature decision was perfectly justified.



Black's queen has four moves, but not one of them saves him – in all variations the f7-pawn proves stronger than his strongest piece:

1) 20...♕b7 21 ♘e6 ♗e5 (21...♖g8 22 fxg8♕+ ♔xg8 23 ♘e7+ ♔h8 24 ♗xg7 mate!) 22 ♘xd8;

2) 20...♕c5 21 ♘e6 ♗e5 22 ♗xe5 dxe5 23 ♘xc5 bxc5 24 ♘c7 ♖b8 25 ♘e8!;

3) 20...♕a7 21 ♘c6 ♗e5 22 ♗xe5 dxe5 23 ♘xa7 ♖xa7 24 ♘xb6 ♖f8 25 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 26 ♖xd7 and 27 f8♕+;

4) 20...♕b8 21 ♘c6 ♗e5 (21...♕b7 22 ♘xd8) 22 ♗xe5 dxe5 23 ♘xb8 ♖xb8 24 ♘c7! (with the threat of ♘e8) 24...♖f8 25 ♘e6 g6 26 ♘xf8 (*or 26 b4! with the threat of c4-c5-c6 – G. K.*) 26...♘xf8 27 ♖d8 and wins. According to Kotov, 21...♗h4 is more tenacious, although even here after 22 ♘xb8 ♖xb8 23 g3 ♗g5 24 h4 ♗h6 25 g4! White has a decisive advantage. I would add 23...♗f6 24 ♘xf6 gxf6 25 ♖xd6! (simpler than 25 ♖xf6) 25...♔g7 26 ♖dxf6 ♔f8 27 ♗a3+ ♘c5 28 ♖xb6 ♖xb6 29 ♗xc5+ ♖bd6 30 e5, or 26 ♗xf6+ (Fritz) 26...♘xf6 27 ♖xd8 ♔xf7 28 ♖d6 ♗e6 29 e5 winning.

Everywhere Black can only watch while the opponent strengthens his position, and therefore we will excuse Sämisch his unwillingness to be a silent witness to his own execution...

In November Alekhine challenged Capablanca to a match for the second time, reminding him that on 1 January 1924 the time granted by the champion to Rubinstein in order to raise the necessary $10,000 would expire. And he set off on a tour of South America: it was time to announce himself on the 'enemy' continent, and also, in the words of the new challenger, 'to discuss all the questions associated with the organisation of the match.'

This five-month tour by the 'European champion' went off very successfully, particular enthusiasm being provoked by his sensational blindfold simultaneous displays – he had set himself the aim of beating the records of Pillsbury and Breyer. But his chances of a match for the crown remained highly unclear. Especially after New York in the spring of 1924, where a tired Alekhine again, as in St Petersburg 1914, was unable to keep pace with Lasker and Capablanca (for the result of this double-round super-tournament, see p.216).

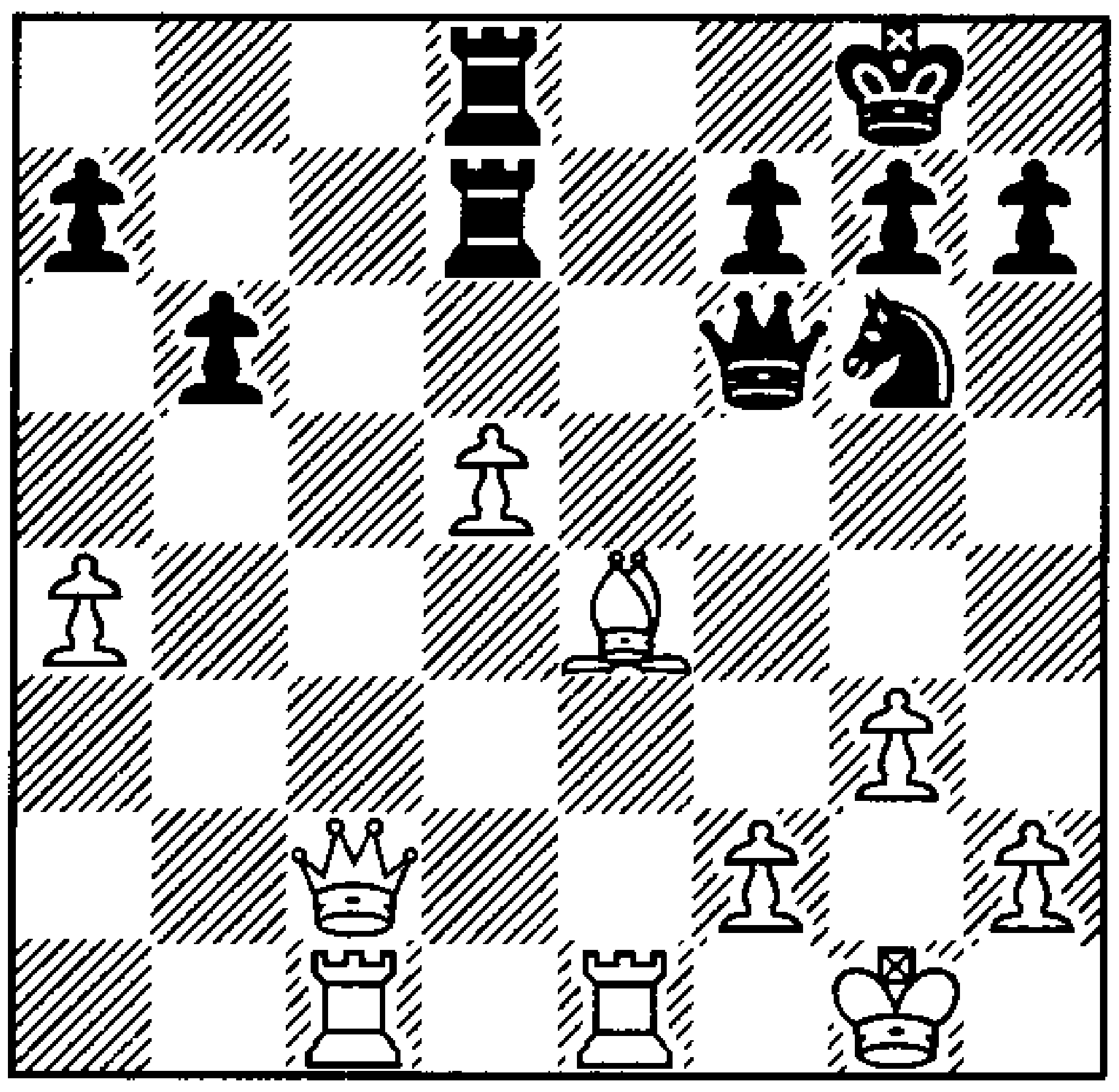
'In the competitive sense I achieved a quite decent result, finishing immediately after the two world champions, which inwardly strengthened my claim,' writes Alekhine, 'but with the level of my mastery I remained completely dissatisfied... Nevertheless I made one very comforting and unexpected discovery. In our first game Capablanca, although he outplayed me in the opening, achieved a winning position in the middlegame and retained the lion's share of his advantage in a rook endgame, in the end he nevertheless missed a win and had to be satisfied with a draw. This makes one wonder, since Capablanca very much wanted to win, to try and catch Lasker... I am sure that in Capablanca's place I would definitely have won. In short, I had noticed in my opponent a little weakness: growing uncertainty in the fact of tenacious resistance! I had already noticed earlier that from time to time Capablanca committed small inaccuracies, but I did not suspect that he would be unable to free himself from this deficiency even when giving his all. This was an unusually important discovery for the future!'

Before setting off to Europe Alekhine did in fact establish a world record for blindfold play, playing 26 games simultaneously (+16 -5 =5). And on 1 February 1925 in Paris he raised this amazing record to 28 games (+22 -3 =3). There too he won a small double-round tournament: 1. Alekhine – 6½ out of 8; 2. Tartakower – 4½; 3-4. Znosko-Borovsky and Opocenský – 4; 5. Colle – 1.

Game 123

A.Alekhine-E.Colle

Paris 1925



28 ♕c6! ♕g5?

'Black is right in avoiding the exchange of queens as both 28...♕xc6 29 dxc6 and 28...♘e7 29 ♕xf6 gxf6 30 d6! would be decidedly in White's favour. But strange as it may seem, the square g5 for the queen – which looks the most natural – will prove fatal. The right move was 28...♕d4, after which there would not be anything clear for White as yet.' (Alekhine) And even more so after 28...♕d6!

29 ♗xg6!

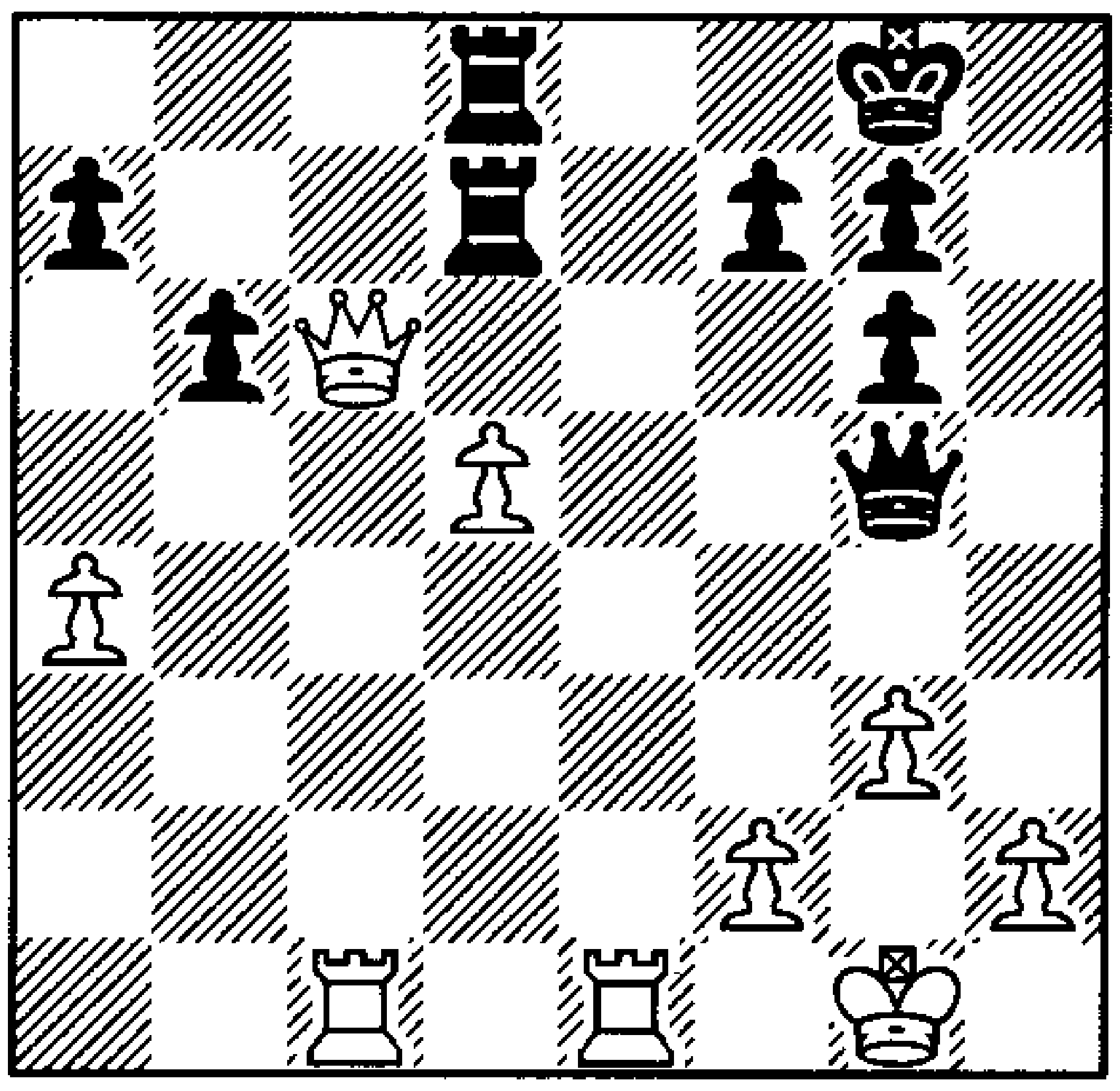
With his sharp tactical eye, Alekhine has noticed a weakness of the back rank.

29...hxg6?

'Necessary was 29...fxg6 (of course not 29...♕xg6 30 ♕xd7) 30 ♕e6+ ♖f7 *(30...♔f8 31 ♖c4! – G. K.)* 31 ♖c8 ♖xc8 32 ♕xc8+ ♖f8 after which White would have had the pleasant choice between 33 ♖e8 ♕f6 34 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8 35 ♕c6 and 33 ♕e6+ ♔h8 34 d6 ♕d2 35 ♖e2 ♕c1+ 36 ♔g2 ♕c6+ 37 ♔h3 most likely winning in either case.' (Alekhine)

Let us check the first of these: 35...♕d8 36 d6 ♔f7 37 ♕c4+ ♔f8 38 ♕c7 ♔e8 39 ♕xg7 ♕xd6 40 ♕g8+ ♔d7 41 ♕xh7+ ♔c6, and now not 42 ♕xa7? ♕d1+ 43 ♔g2 ♕d5+ 44 f3 ♕d2+ 45 ♔h3 ♕h6+ with perpetual check, but 42 h4! winning.

But what is bad about the text move, which opens an escape square at h7? It turns out that this is not enough: a move earlier Black himself constructed a trap for his king.



30 ♕xd7!!

Despite everything! 'This queen's sacrifice is only possible because Black's g5 is occupied by the queen.' (Alekhine)

30...♖xd7 31 ♖e8+ ♔h7 32 ♖cc8 ♖d8 33 ♖exd8! 1-0

After this there followed a triumph in the outstandingly strong Baden-Baden 1925 (55 years after Anderssen's triumph!): 1. Alekhine – 16 out of 20 (undefeated); 2. Rubinstein – 14½; 3. Sämisch – 13½; 4. Bogoljubow – 13; 5-6. Marshall and Tartakower – 12½; 7. I. Rabinovich – 12; 8. Grünfeld – 11½; 9. Nimzowitsch – 11; 10. Torre – 10½; 11-13. Réti, Treybal and Spielmann – 10 etc.

After a draw with Torre in the first round Alekhine won nine games in a row, including wins with Black against Tarrasch, Nimzowitsch and Réti. The last of these was so good, that to this day the chess world admires this unsurpassed masterpiece.

As I have already described, in the early 1920s Réti threw down a challenge to the classical school with his 'crooked' opening 1 ♘f3, 2 g3 and c2-c4, believing passionately in the effectiveness of undermining the centre and in the strength of fianchettoed bishops. This novel method proved successful even against the most powerful opponents, including Rubinstein (Game No.96) and Capablanca (Game No.97), who lost the thread of the game due to unfamiliarity with those types of position. Later Réti's opening was employed by both Capa and Alekhine, and many others, and nowadays it occurs frequently in tournaments of any standard. And there are few who, when playing 1 ♘f3, think of how in such torment the truth was born more than three quarters of a century ago...

Game 124

R.Réti-A.Alekhine

Baden-Baden 1925

Réti Opening A00

1 g3 (instead of his favourite 1 ♘f3!) **1...e5! 2 ♘f3**

'An experiment which Réti never repeated after the present game. White intends to play the Alekhine's Defence with colours reversed, i.e. with one tempo more. But the way he uses that tempo (g2-g3) could have turned to his disadvantage.' (Alekhine)

But here is an experiment from the second half of the 20th century: 2 ♗g2 d5 3 ♘f3 e4 4 ♘d4 c5 5 ♘b3 c4 6 ♘d4 ♗c5 7 c3 ♘c6 (7...♕b6 8 d3!) 8 ♘xc6 bxc6 9 0-0 ♘e7 (or 9...♘f6 10 b3) 10 b3! ♗a6 11 ♗a3! ♕b6 12 bxc4 ♗xc4 13 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 14 d3 exd3 15 exd3 ♗a6 16 ♖e1 0-0 17 d4 ♕d6 18 ♘d2 with a slight positional plus for White (Larsen-Donner, Zürich 1959).

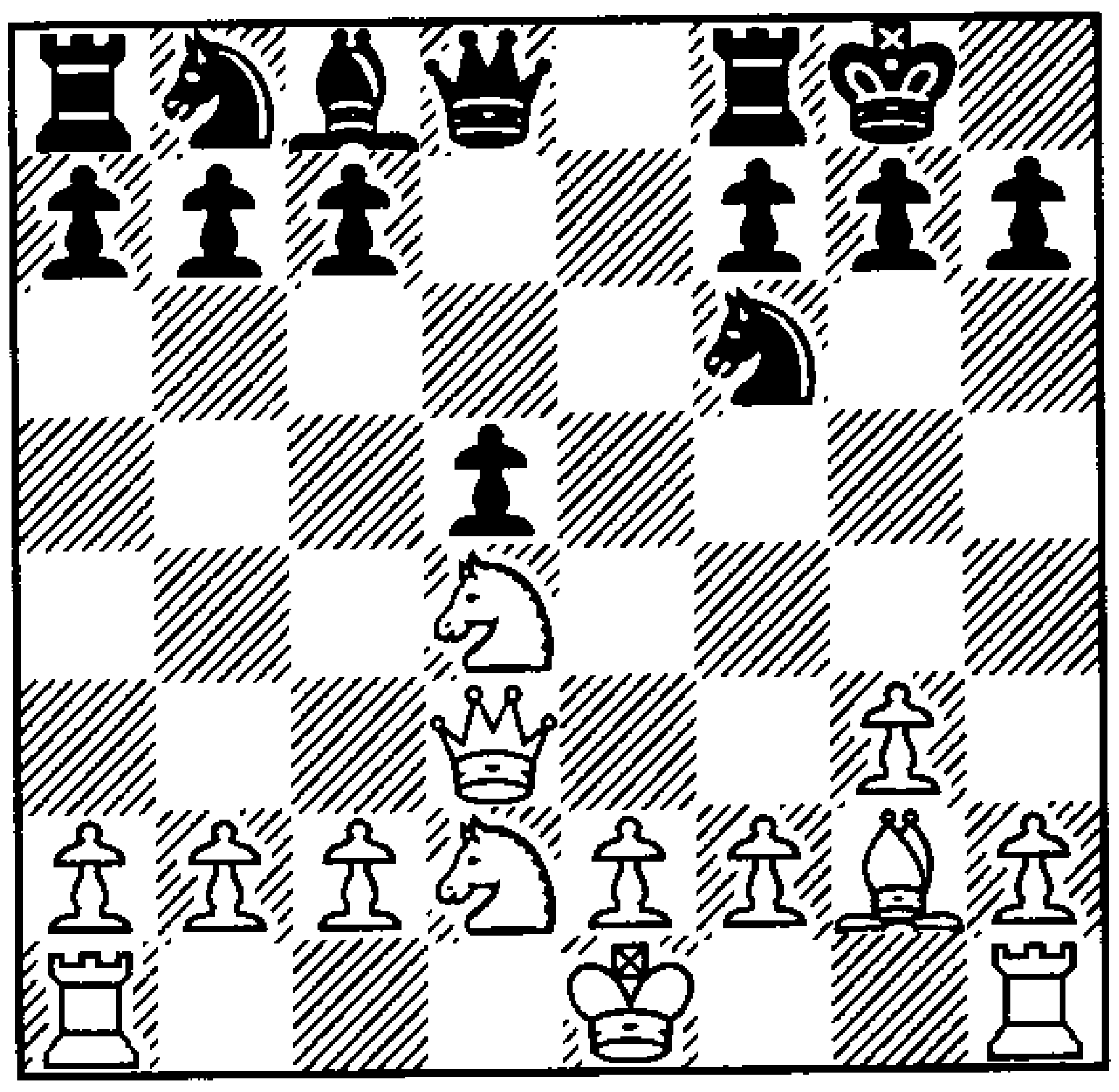
2...e4 3 ♘d4 d5

As Alekhine put it, Black is satisfied with free development and roughly equal chances, although by 3...c5! 4 ♘b3 c4 5 ♘d4 ♗c5 6 c3 ♘c6 he could have demonstrated the entire absurdity of such 'development' by White. But Larsen (see above) did not agree with this!

4 d3 exd3 5 ♕xd3 ♘f6 6 ♗g2 ♗b4+ (it is not altogether clear whether Black should aim for the exchange of the dark-squared bishops)

7 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 8 ♘xd2 0-0

In the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings* (1979) 8...♘bd7 9 c4 c5?! 10 ♘4b3 d4 was recommended 'with advantage to Black', but after the interposition of 10 ♕e3+! he is prevented from castling.



9 c4! ♘a6

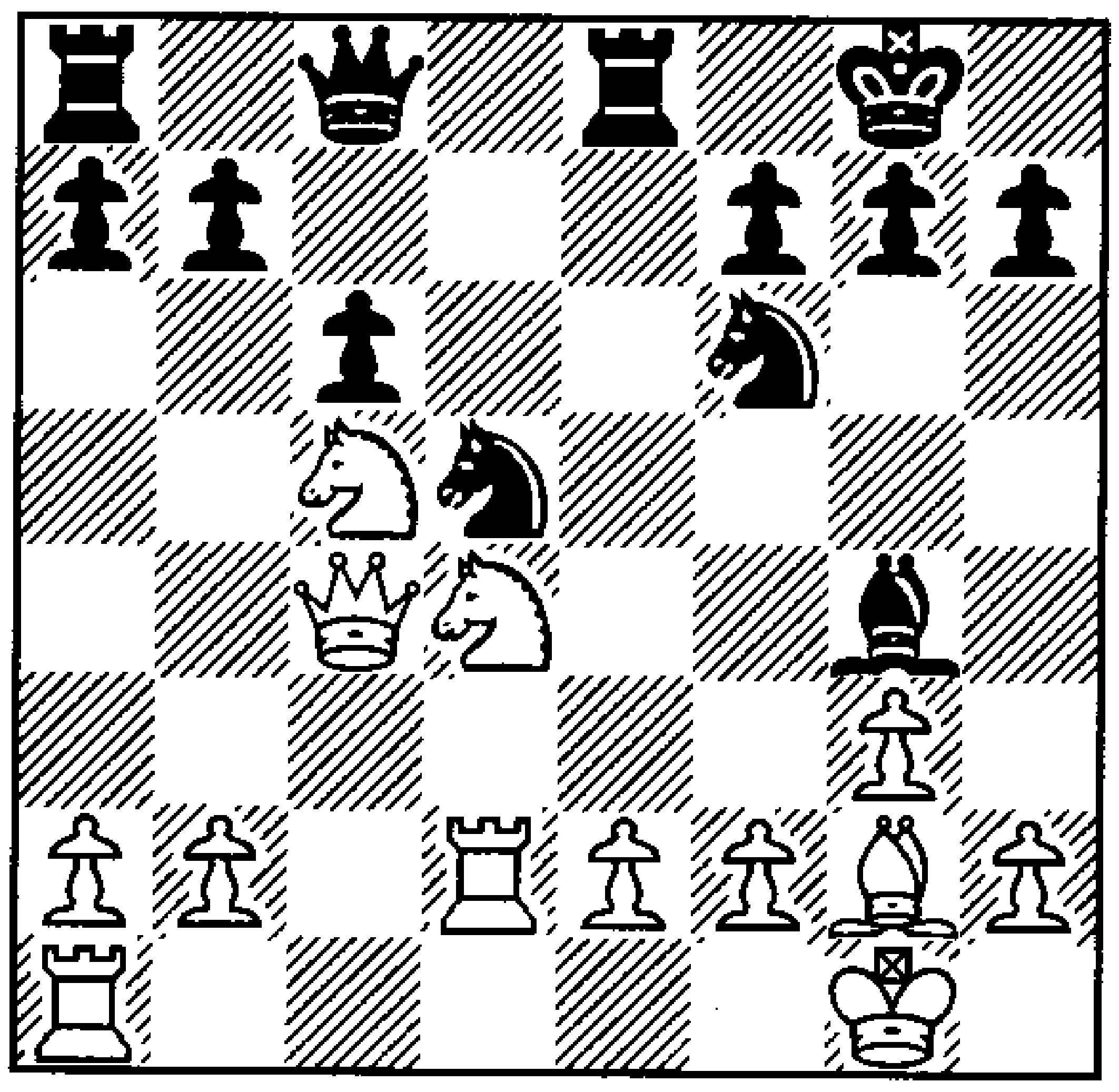
'Apart from his eccentric first move, Réti plays the opening very well; Black would not have any advantage by answering 9...c5 because of 10 ♘4b3 threatening both 11 ♘xc5 and 11 cxd5.' (Alekhine)

10 cxd5 ♘b4 11 ♕c4 ♘bxd5 12 ♘2b3 c6 13 0-0 ♖e8 14 ♖fd1 ♗g4 15 ♖d2

After 15 h3 Black was intending 15...♗h5 and ...♗g6-e4, to neutralise the powerful bishop at g2. He also aims for this in the game.

15...♕c8 16 ♘c5

White pursues his own course.



16...♗h3! 17 ♗f3

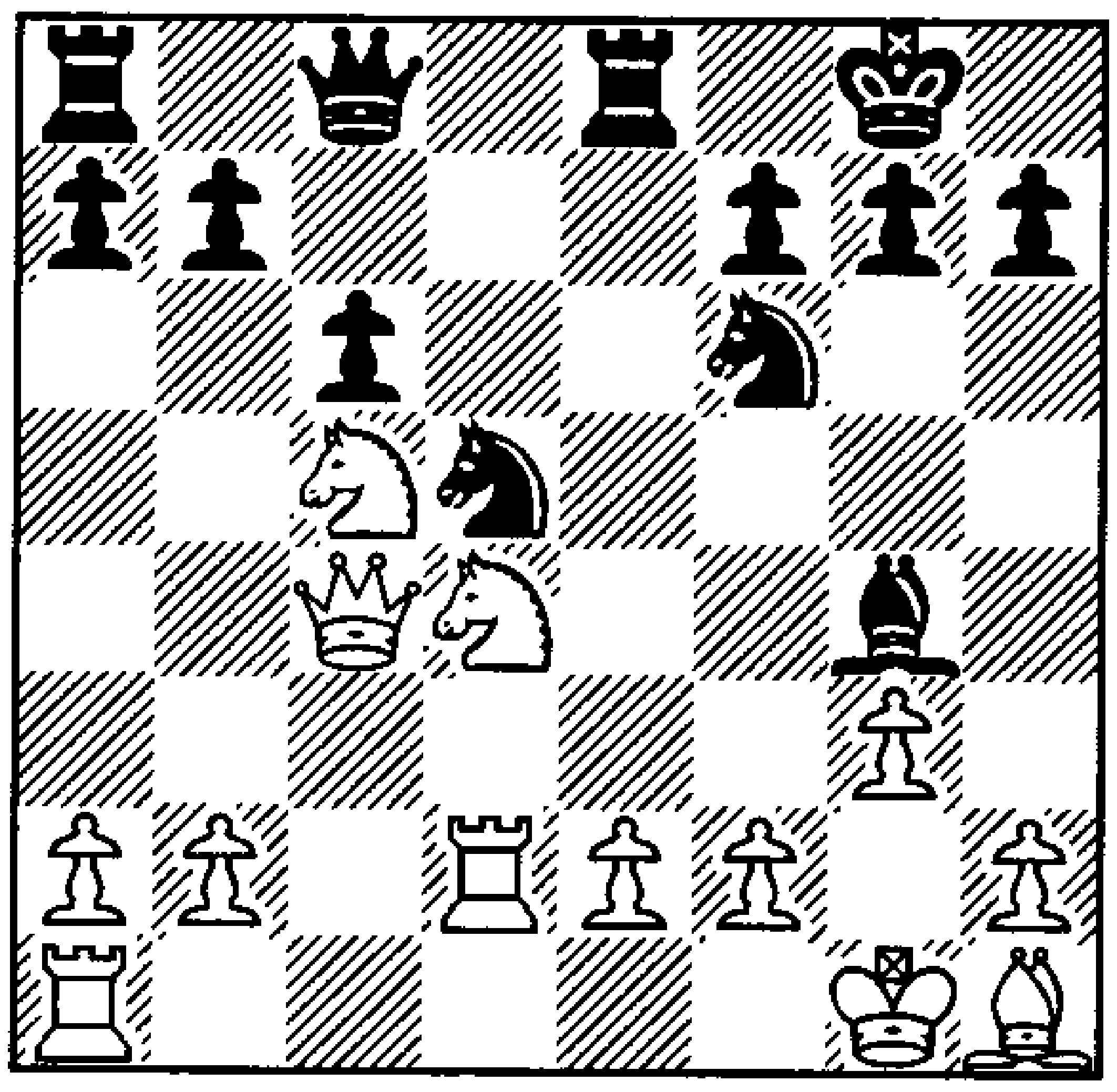
As usual, Alekhine's plan is based on tactical nuances: 17 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 18 ♘xb7? is not possible in view of 18...♘g4 19 ♘f3 ♘de3! 20 fxe3 ♘xe3 21 ♕xf7+ ♔h8! 22 ♘h4 ♖f8 winning.

17...♗g4 18 ♗g2 ♗h3 19 ♗f3 ♗g4

A subtle psychological calculation: Alekhine tacitly offers a draw, knowing perfectly well that for this opponent to avoid a fight with White at such an early stage would be equivalent to a moral defeat. But it is also uncomfortable for White to exchange his strong bishop...

20 ♗h1?!

Take note, this is an historic moment! 'Had Réti played 20 ♗g2, the game would have ended in a draw by repetition and we would not have seen a brilliant combination... Fickle fortune rules in chess, though is this true only of chess?' (Kotov)

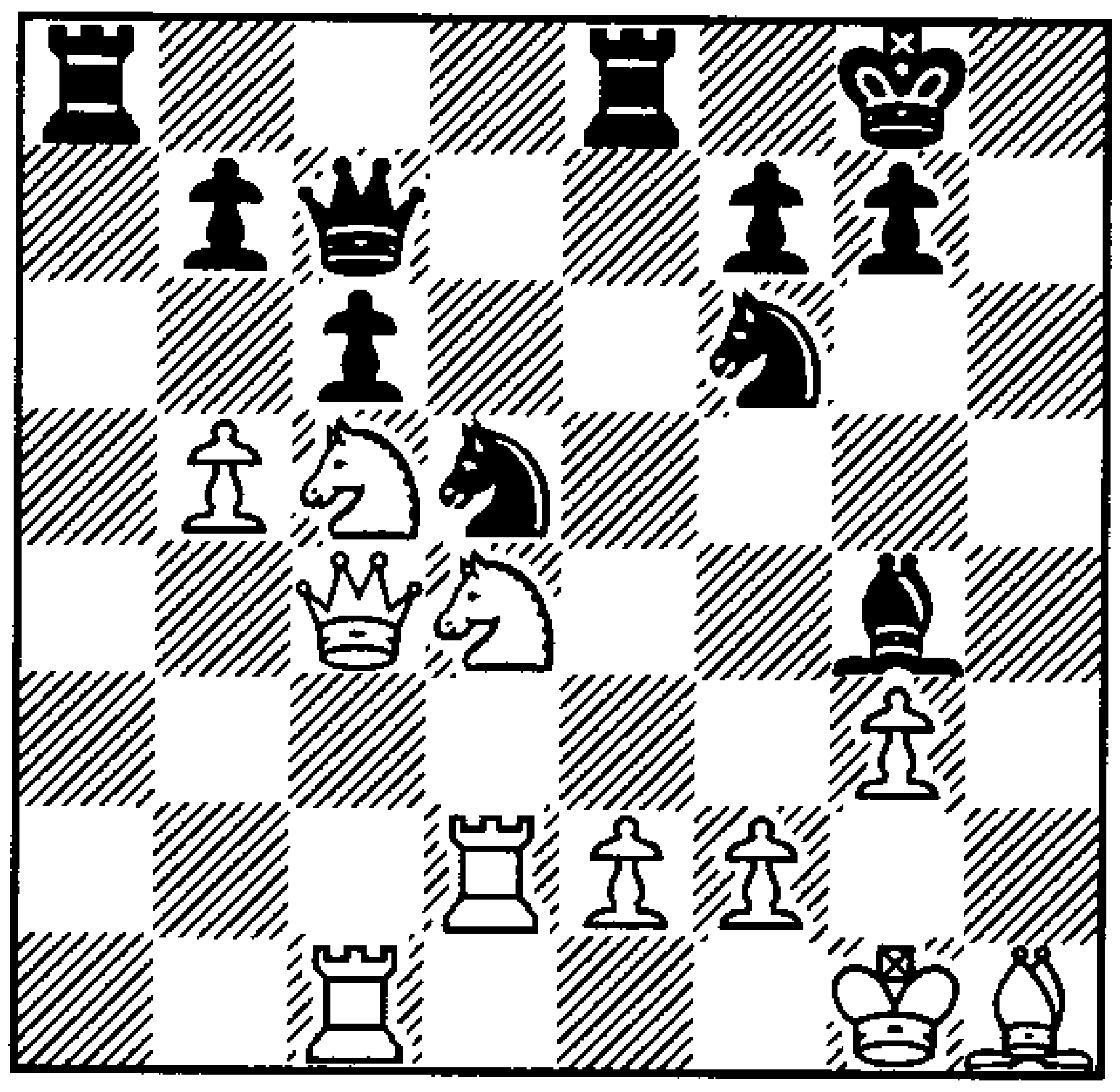


20...h5! (signalling the start of a direct attack on the king: first the g3-point has to be weakened) **21 b4 a6 22 ♖c1 h4 23 a4 hxg3 24 hxg3 ♕c7 25 b5**

'Consequent, but very risky to say the least.' (Alekhine) 25 e4 was much safer, when Black was intending 25...♘b6 and ...♘bd7! with sufficient counterplay. But Réti, of course, did not want to block the h1-a8 diagonal of his favourite bishop.

25...axb5 26 axb5

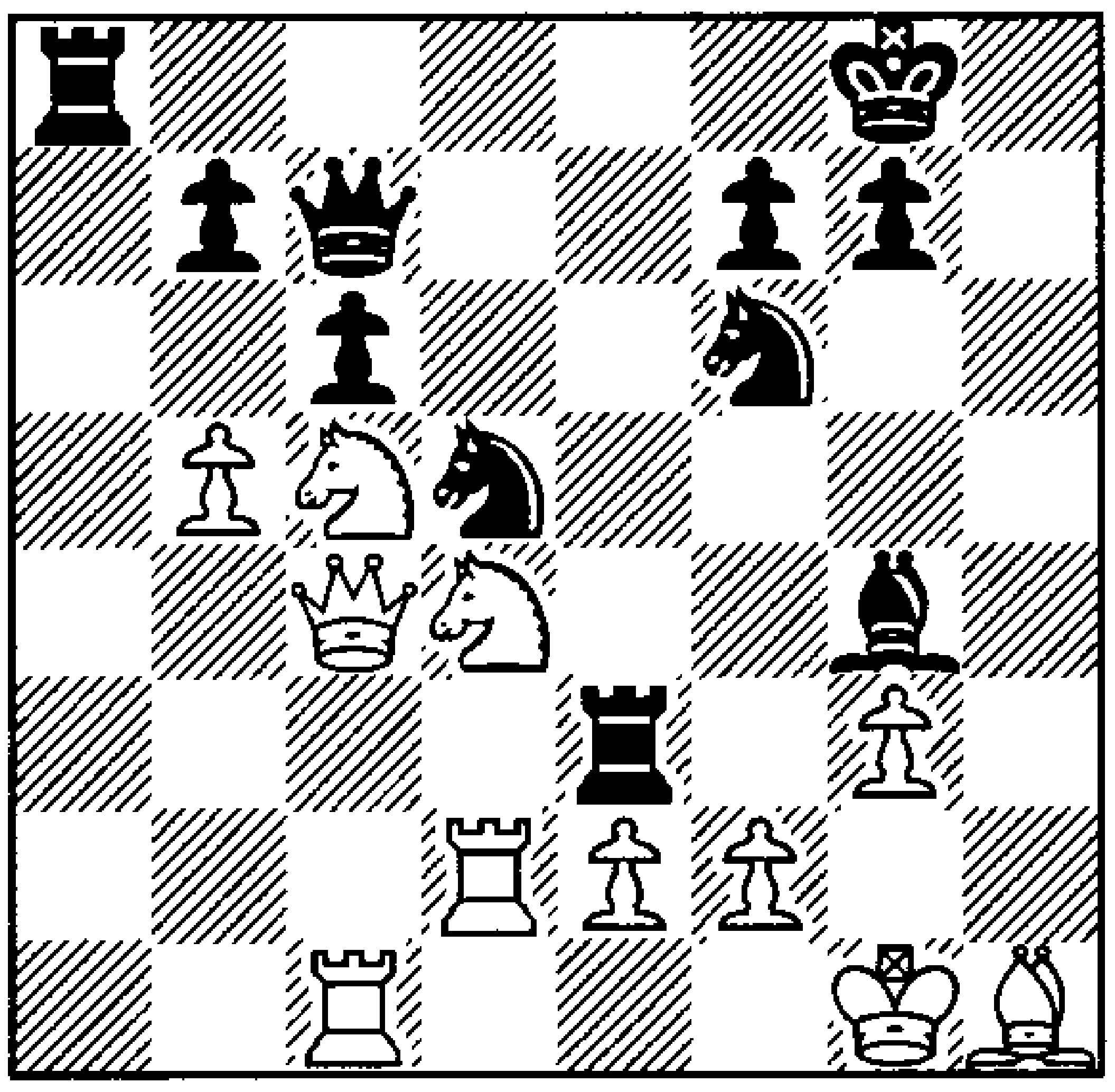
It appears that White's strategy has triumphed: he is about to give the opponent a weak pawn, which will be bound to fall. But Alekhine finds a resource that radically changes the picture.



26...♖e3!

'It seems almost incredible that this spectacular move not only stops White's attack but even brings him serious trouble.' (Alekhine)

His king suddenly finds itself in difficulties: 27 fxe3?? ♕xg3+ 28 ♗g2 ♘xe3, and 27...♖xg3+ is threatened. And Réti, unable to withstand Alekhine's pressure, flinches... fortunately for the chess world!



27 ♘f3?

Strangely enough, this is already an irreparable mistake. 27 ♗g2?! ♖xg3! 28 e3 (not 28 fxg3? ♘e3 29 ♕d3 ♕xg3) is dubious in view of 28...♕e5!, when neither 29 bxc6? ♘xe3! 30 fxe3 ♕xe3+ nor 29 fxg3? ♕xe3+ 30 ♖f2 cxb5! 31 ♘xb5 ♗e2 32 ♕c2 ♘g4 is possible, while if 29 ♕d3 Black has 29...♖xg2+! 30 ♔xg2 b6!! 31 ♘cb3 (31 ♘xc6 ♕h5) 31...♘b4 (31...c5!?) 32 ♕b1 c5 winning.

'Also insufficient was 27 ♔h2 because of 27...♖aa3! 28 ♘cb3 (not 28 fxe3 ♘xe3 followed by ...♘f1+ etc.) 28...♕e5! 29 bxc6 bxc6 with a powerful attack as 30 fxe3 would still be bad because of 30...♕h5+ followed by 31...♕h3.' (Alekhine) However, no quick win is apparent: 32 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 33 ♘f3 ♕xg3+ 34 ♔h1 ♗xf3+ 35 exf3 ♕xf3+ 36 ♔h2 ♕xe3 37 ♕xc6 ♖xb3 38 ♕c8+ ♔h7 39 ♕f5+ ♔h6 40 ♖c6+ f6 etc. But, of course, better is 30 ♗f3! ♗xf3 31 exf3! (threatening fxe3 or ♕xc6), parrying the attack.

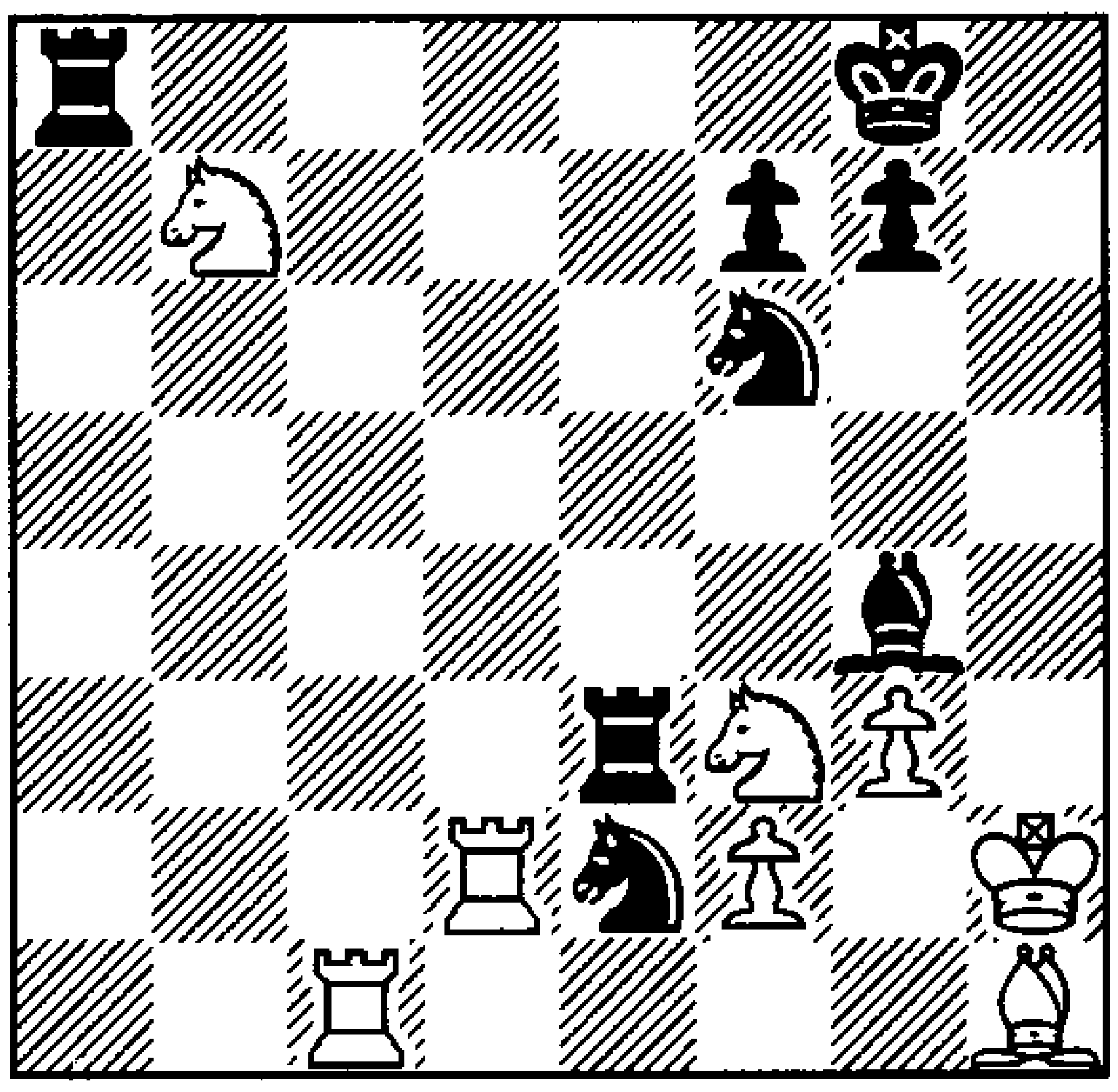
'The only chance of salvation was 27 ♗f3! ♗xf3 28 exf3! cxb5 29 ♘xb5 ♕a5! still with advantage for Black, as 30 ♖xd5 would lose immediately after 30...♖e1+ 31 ♖xe1 ♕xe1+ 32 ♔g2 ♖a1.' (Alekhine) Here there is obviously some misunderstanding: after 33 ♖d8+ ♔h7 34 ♕h4+ ♔g6 35 f4! it is not White who loses, but Black! And if 32...♘xd5 (instead of 32...♖a1?) 33 ♕xd5 ♖a1, then it is a draw: 34 ♕d8+ ♔h7 35 ♕h4+. Also in the event of 30 ♖dd1 ♖e7 31 ♘d6 it is hard to speak of any advantage for Black.

27...cxb5! (the start of a typhoon that sweeps almost all the pieces from the board) **28 ♕xb5 ♘c3! 29 ♕xb7** (29 ♕c4? b5! and ...♘xe2+) **29...♕xb7**

'And not 29...♘xe2+ because of 30 ♖xe2! ♕xb7 31 ♖xe3! with some saving chances for White.' (Alekhine)

30 ♘xb7 ♘xe2+ 31 ♔h2

After 31 ♔f1 Alekhine gives 31...♘xg3+ 32 fxg3 ♗xf3 33 ♗xf3 ♖xf3+ 34 ♔g2 ♖aa3 35 ♖d8+ ♔h7 36 ♖h1+ ♔g6 37 ♖h3 ♖fb3! winning.



Can Black really count on anything serious? After all, both 31...♘xc1 32 fxe3 ♖a3 and 31...♖xf3 32 ♖xe2 ♖xg3 33 ♔xg3 ♗xe2, although they win a pawn, leave White with serious chances of a draw...

31...♘e4!!

'The beginning of a new combination – which, however, is the absolutely logical consequence of the previous manoeuvres – aiming, after a series of twelve practically forced moves, at the capture of White's exposed knight at b7.' (Alekhine)

But what a knight move! The audacious black rook has already been en prise for six moves!

'It was Alekhine's stamina that carried him to victory. It was in the most complicated positions that Alekhine found his greatest concepts.' (Fischer).

32 ♖c4!?

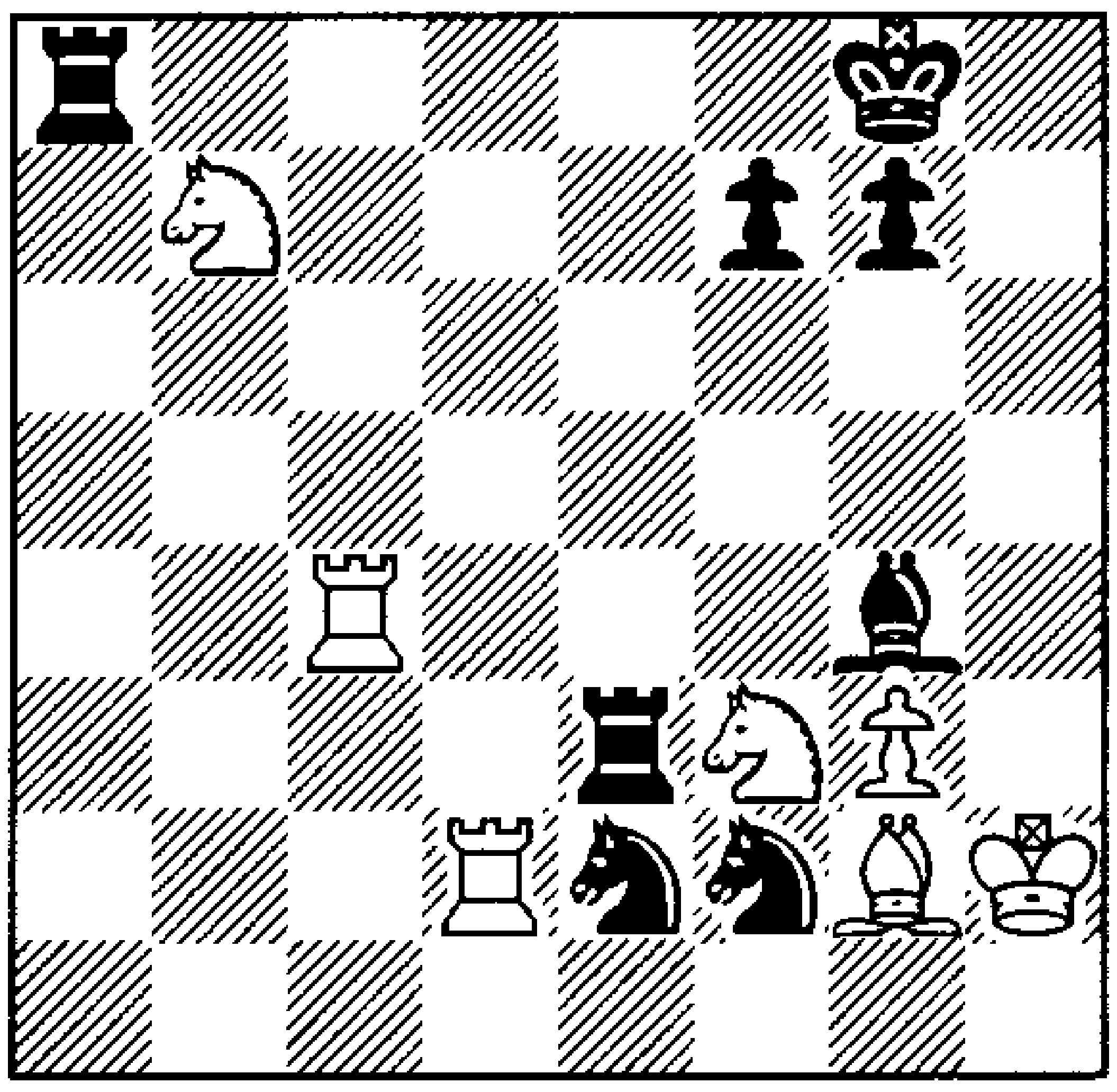
A desperate tactical trick! Alekhine and Kotov attach an exclamation mark to this move, calling it the best defence. 32 fxe3? ♘xd2 is clearly bad, while after 32 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 33 fxe3 ♖d5! 34 ♖c4 ♘2xg3 Black is a pawn up with a decisive attack, for example: 35 ♗g2 ♘f1+! 36 ♔h1 ♖d1 37 ♖d4 ♘eg3+ 38 ♔g1 ♘d2+ etc.

32...♘xf2

A simple refutation: Black picks up the key f2-pawn and maintains all his threats. Réti was cherishing hopes of 32...♘xd2? 33 ♘xd2! ♖d3 34 ♘c5! equalising or at least 32...♗xf3?! 33 ♖xe4!! ♗xe4 (or 33...♖xe4 34 ♗xf3) 34 fxe3 ♗xh1 35 ♔xh1 with drawing chances.

33 ♗g2

Black is now obviously winning, but see how he does this:



33...♗e6!

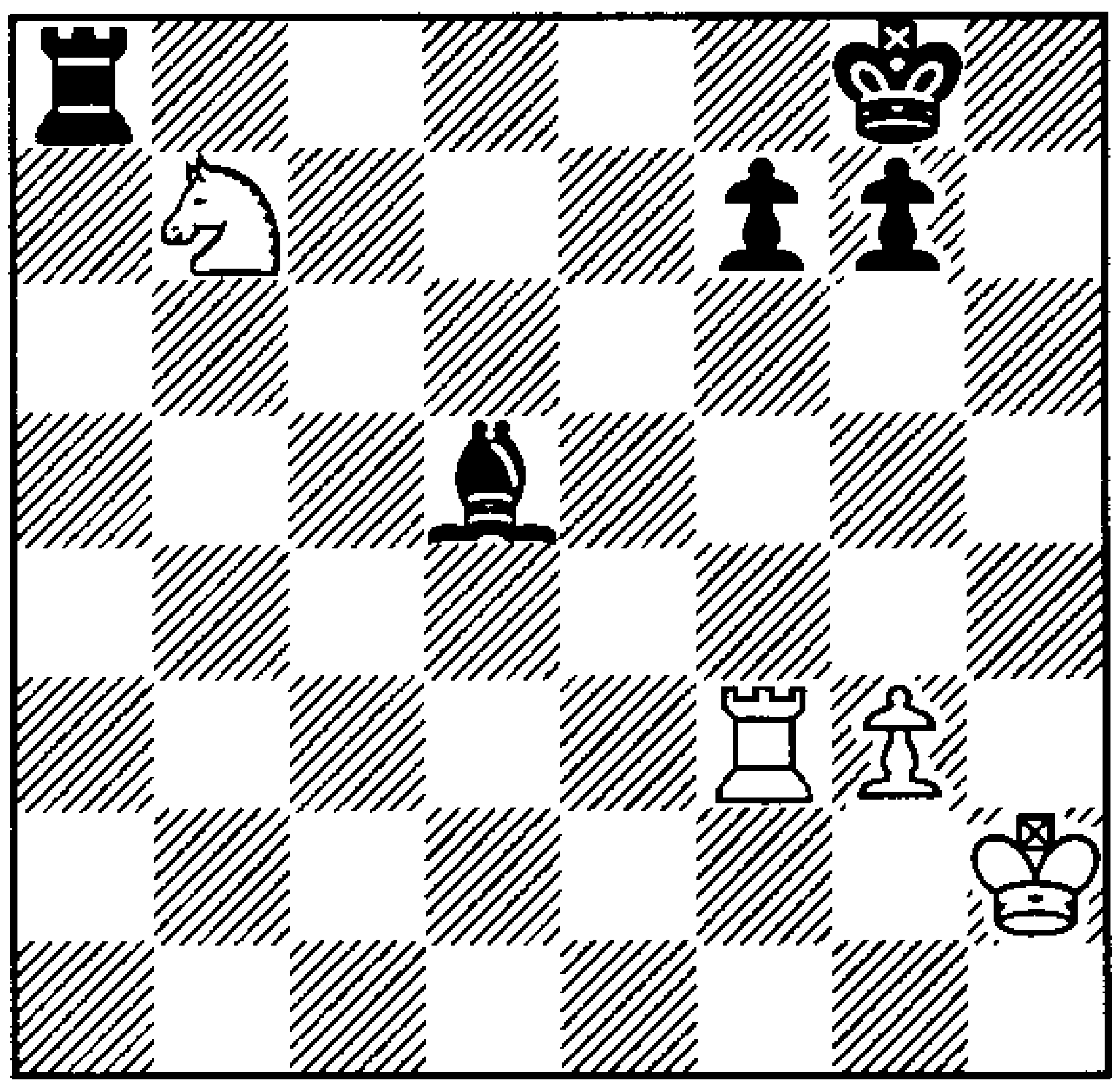
An essential link of the combination! It is easy to see that White has no choice.

34 ♖cc2 ♘g4+ 35 ♔h3 (35 ♔h1 ♖a1+) **35...♘e5+ 36 ♔h2** (36 ♔h4 ♖a4+) **36...♖xf3! 37 ♖xe2 ♘g4+ 38 ♔h3**

And again after 38 ♔h1 there would have followed a deadly rook check.

38...♘e3+ 39 ♔h2 ♘xc2 40 ♗xf3 ♘d4! 0-1

After 41 ♖f2 (or 41 ♖e3) 41...♘xf3+ 42 ♖xf3 ♗d5! – the final blow! – he loses his errant knight. In my opinion, this geometric position deserves a separate diagram:



Analysis diagram

A real diamond, one of the most brilliant games in the history of chess, which has won the hearts of millions. Alekhine considered both this game and the one against Bogoljubow in Hastings 1922 as the best in his career. And, by a strange coincidence, they did not receive any awards, since at neither tournament were there any brilliancy prizes...

Alekhine's victory in Baden-Baden made an enormous impression on the chess world. I will give only two typical opinions by famous participants in the tournament.

Tarrasch: 'In not one game did Alekhine have even an inferior position. His victory in this extremely strong tournament, one of the most brilliant in history, shows that he has every reason to fight for the world championship... A comparison of Capablanca's games, played in New York, with the Baden-Baden games of Alekhine from the standpoint of strategic accuracy, correctness of play and consistency in the conduct of attack, is undoubtedly in favour of Alekhine. The world champion has acquired a formidable opponent, improving from year to year, and it is doubtful whether Capablanca will be able to barricade himself for long from a match with

Alekhine with the gold wall of $10,000.'

Tartakower: 'We are witnessing a wonderful mystery: the hopes of the great Chigorin are beginning at last to be fulfilled. And if Morphy was the poet of chess, Steinitz – the fighter, Lasker – the philosopher, and Capablanca – the wonder-machine, then Alekhine, in keeping with the eternally restless and self-torturing Russian spirit, is showing himself increasingly to be the seeker of chess truth... Capablanca has the title, Lasker has the results, but only Alekhine has the style of a real world champion.'

And this is what Alekhine himself thought about his performance in Baden-Baden: 'The tournament showed me that I was stronger than all the masters who played in it. But in what way was I still inferior to Capablanca? I had not yet rid myself of two defects. The first was excessive dogmatism, that is a striving without fail to fully exploit small advantages that had been gained, which deprived my play of the required flexibility. The second was still imperfect technique in the transition from the middlegame to the most favourable endgame... But from the standpoint of general chess technique and methods I already then felt myself to be fully equal with Capablanca's strength.'

Alas, he was not invited to the second major tournament of the year, Moscow 1925. The all-union chess section headed by the chairman of the Supreme Tribunal Nikolai Krylenko 'did not consider it possible to enter into any discussions with Alekhine about his participation in the international tournament in Moscow, considering this master to be an element alien and hostile to the Soviet authorities.' So there you have it!

However, the grandmaster used the resulting respite to his advantage: he again got married and in the autumn of 1925 he also prepared and defended his dissertation on the theme 'The system of imprisonment in China' at the Sorbonne – and he became a Doctor of Law.

The following year, 1926, was spent preparing for the match with Capablanca. Perfecting his style, Alekhine won tournaments in Hastings, Scarborough and Birmingham, and was second in Semmering (after Spielmann) and Dresden (after Nimzowitsch). But the main thing was that he made a staggeringly successful voyage to South America, where the Argentine Government undertook to guarantee the financial basis of a match for the world champion demanded by the London agreement. Then he, in his own words, 'again sent a challenge to Capablanca, although I did not immediately receive a definite reply, and in early 1927 the question of the match remained open.'

Buenos Aires through the Eyes of Alekhine

In the winter (1926/27) he played a training match in Holland with the improving Max Euwe and prevailed only by a miracle, after a dramatic win in the final, 10th game: 5½-4½ (+3 -2 =5). Alekhine reached dubious positions, made uncharacteristic oversights, and in the seventh game he even blundered a piece in a winning position... What told was both fatigue after the South American tour, and the new, uncustomary time control – 40 moves in 2½ hours (which became standard right up to the end of the 1980s), and nervousness over the long-awaited match with Capablanca, who was delaying giving a definite reply.

In February Alekhine arrived for the super-tournament in New York, where he, Capablanca and the Argentine organisers finally reached an agreement about the match. The tournament itself was won by the champion, 2½ points ahead of the challenger, who took second place (for the result of New York 1927, cf. p.307). 'Today he [Alekhine] has what is perhaps the best rounded game of all masters,' Capa said diplomatically before the start, and after the finish he added: 'He showed himself without doubt the strongest of our competitors.'

Alekhine was unhappy with his form, but full of optimism: 'As a prologue to the battle for the world championship, New York 1927 was of great and very real significance, although completely contradictory to that which the chess world thought about this event: fortune endowed the Cuban hero with an ambiguous smile, in which behind outward approval was concealed a cautious warning, but her favourite, alas, was unable to see through this smile. And in addition, the tournament allowed his future opponent, immediately before the decisive battle, to test in a number of new examples his observations of the past years and to come therefore to the correct conclusions.'

A couple of months before the match, the challenger thoroughly limbered up in Kecskemet (12 out of 16, undefeated), and in the very first game of the historic battle in Buenos Aires, on 16th September, he knocked out the champion with Black! I should remind you that the winner was the first to score six wins and Capa quickly 'put his house in order' by winning the third and seventh games. It appeared that everything was back in place, but at this moment Alekhine created a fantastic 'double'.

Game 125

J.R.Capablanca-A.Alekhine

World Championship Match,
Buenos Aires 1927, 11th game
Queen's Gambit D52

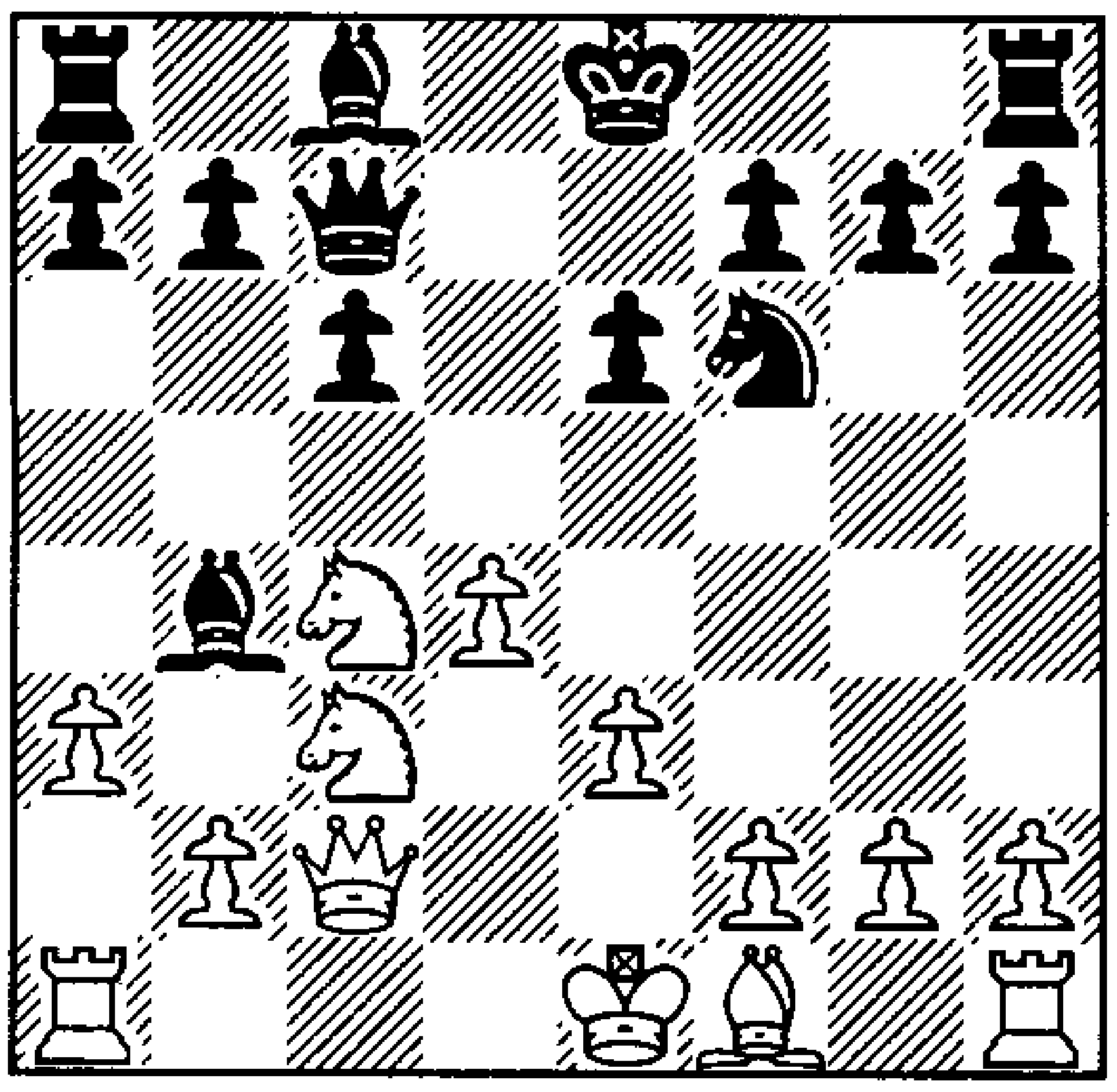
1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♘bd7 5 e3 c6 6 ♘f3 ♕a5 7 ♘d2 ♗b4 8 ♕c2 dxc4!?

Running repairs to the Cambridge Springs: in the seventh game 8...0-0 9 ♗h4!? was played (*Game No.104*).

9 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 10 ♘xc4 ♕c7

A problematic situation: White has a spatial advantage, whereas Black has the two bishops and promising counterplay. Nowadays positions of this type are very popular – for example, in the Moscow Variation: 4 ♘f3 c6 5 ♗g5 h6 6 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 7 e3 ♘d7 8 ♗d3 dxc4 9 ♗xc4 ♗d6 10 0-0 ♕e7 11 ♘e4 ♗c7 followed by ...0-0, ...♖d8, ...♘f8 and ...♗d7-e8 (as Dreev often plays). But at that time this was a step forward, a revelation: after all, Black concedes the centre! But in contrast, say, to the 11th game of the Capablanca-Lasker match (*Game No.91*) he has compensation for this in the form of the two bishops.

11 a3!?



A mini-novelty; previously the f1-bishop was developed immediately. This was also done later: 11 ♗e2 (11 g3!?) 11...0-0 12 0-0 ♖d8 (12...♗d7!?; 12...b6!? 13 ♖ac1 ♗b7 14 ♗f3 ♖ac8) 13 ♖ad1 ♘d5 14 ♘e4 ♗e7 15 a3 b6 16 ♗d3 ♗b7 17 ♖c1 ♖ac8 18 b4 h6 19 ♕b3 ♘f6 (Bogoljubow-Alekhine, Germany/Holland 10th matchgame 1929), or 13 a3 ♗e7 14 b4 b6 15 ♖fd1 ♘d5 (Mikenas-Alekhine, Prague Olympiad 1931) with equal chances in each case.

11...♗e7 12 ♗e2 (in the 29th game 12 g3! was played – *Game No.106*) **12...0-0**

'12...c5 would still be premature because of 13 ♘b5 ♕d8 14 dxc5 ♗xc5 15 b4 ♗e7 16 ♘a5 etc. with a clear advantage.' (Alekhine)

13 0-0 (if 13 b4 there is the typical 13...♘d5 14 0-0 ♗d7, then ...♖fd8 and ...♗e8)

13...♗d7

'This creates a number of difficulties. 13...c5 was better.' (Kotov) Say, 14 dxc5 ♕xc5 15 b4 ♕c7 and Black soon frees himself. But

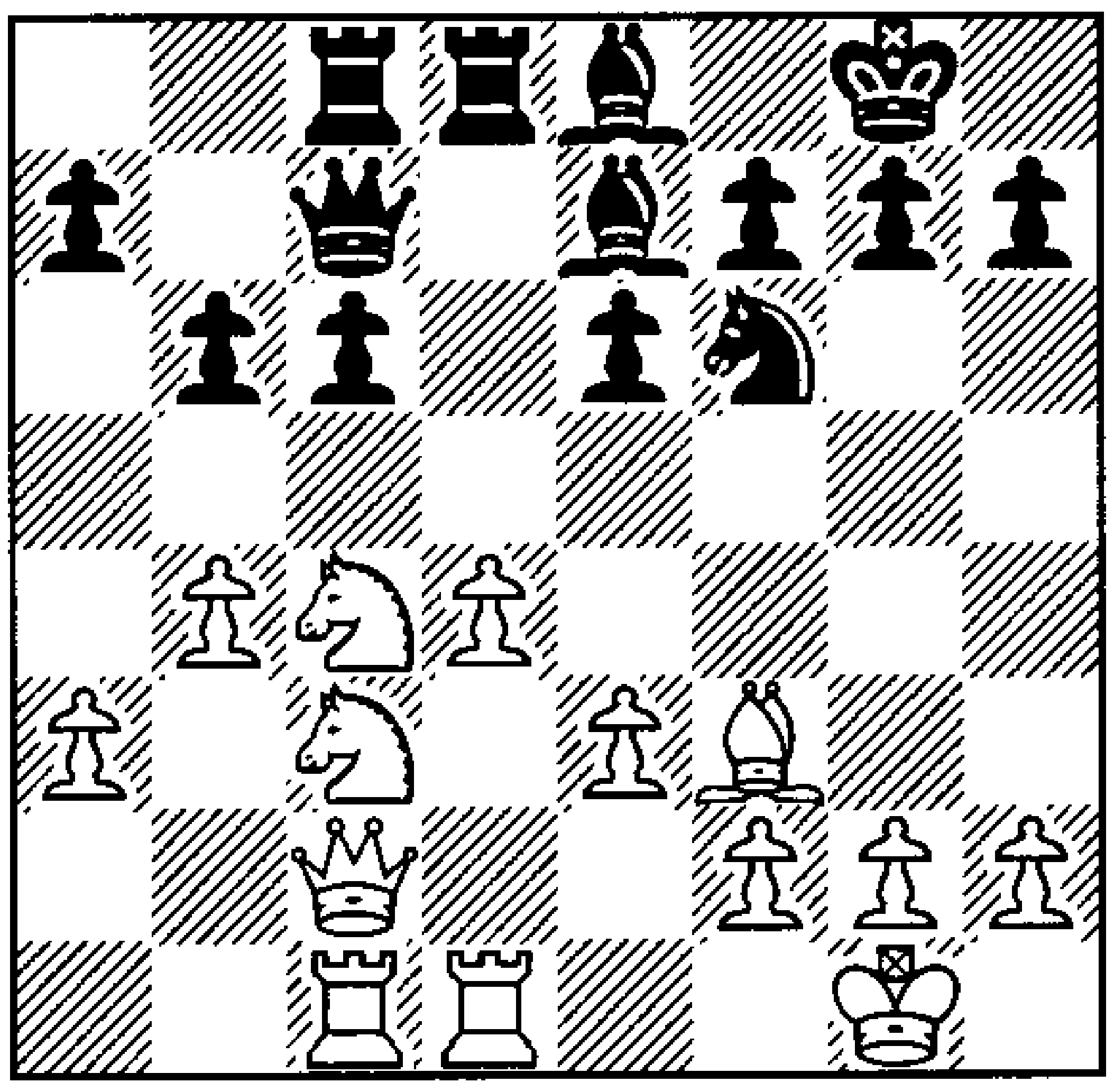
Alekhine considered 13...c5?! 'inadvisable for analogous reasons': 14 ♘b5! ♕d8 15 dxc5 ♗xc5 16 b4 etc.

14 b4 b6 (according to Alekhine, first 14...♖fd8 and ...♗e8 was safer) **15 ♗f3!** (if 15 ♖fd1 Black was planning 15...a5! 16 bxa5 b5) **15...♖ac8**

'If now 15...a5 then 16 ♘e5! axb4 17 ♘b5 etc. with the advantage.' (Alekhine)

16 ♖fd1 ♖fd8 17 ♖ac1 ♗e8

A critical situation!



Capablanca, enslaved by traditional concepts, evaluated this position in favour of White: 'He has all the preconditions for winning the game, so that the system of development chosen by Black is bad.'

But here is a more modern evaluation: 'Alekhine has set up a position in the spirit of Steinitz, and the lurking black bishops are awaiting the opening of diagonals. Therefore Capablanca mounts a slow attack in the centre and on the flanks.' (Bronstein) Of course, Capa arranges his pieces competently, but it would appear that the resulting position is not to his taste and Alekhine subtly sensed this.

18 g3

'A good positional move, the immediate object of which is to prevent the answer ...♕f4 in case of e3-e4.' (Alekhine)

18...♘d5 19 ♘b2

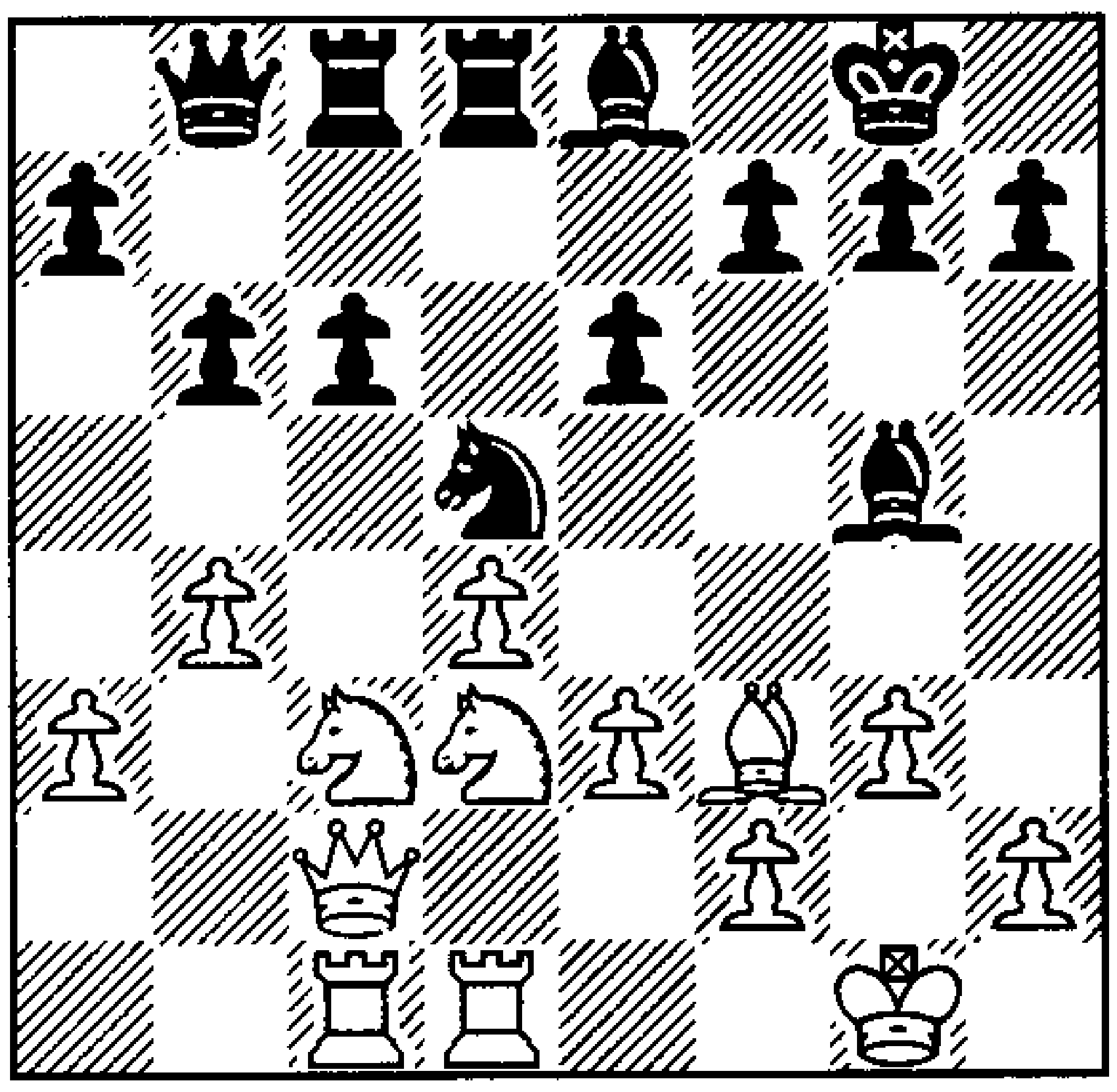
White manoeuvres, cunningly transferring his knight to d3 to prevent the unpleasant undermining move ...c6-c5. Black also does not hurry, but moves here and there... One senses the class of the two opponents: a battle of 'heavyweights'!

19...♕b8

With the idea of ...♘xc3 and ...c6-c5. According to Alekhine, 'more exact was the immediate 19...♕b7, keeping in mind the possibility of ...♕a6.'

20 ♘d3 ♗g5

'Introducing fresh tactical threats.' (Levenfish, Romanovsky) White has to defend against 21...♘xe3 22 fxe3 ♗xe3+ 23 ♔h1 ♗xc1 and ...♖xd4.



21 ♖b1 ♕b7 (now 21...♘xe3? is unfavourable and especially 21...♗xe3? 22 ♗xd5!) **22 e4** (sooner or later this had to be played) **22...♘xc3 23 ♕xc3 ♕e7?!**

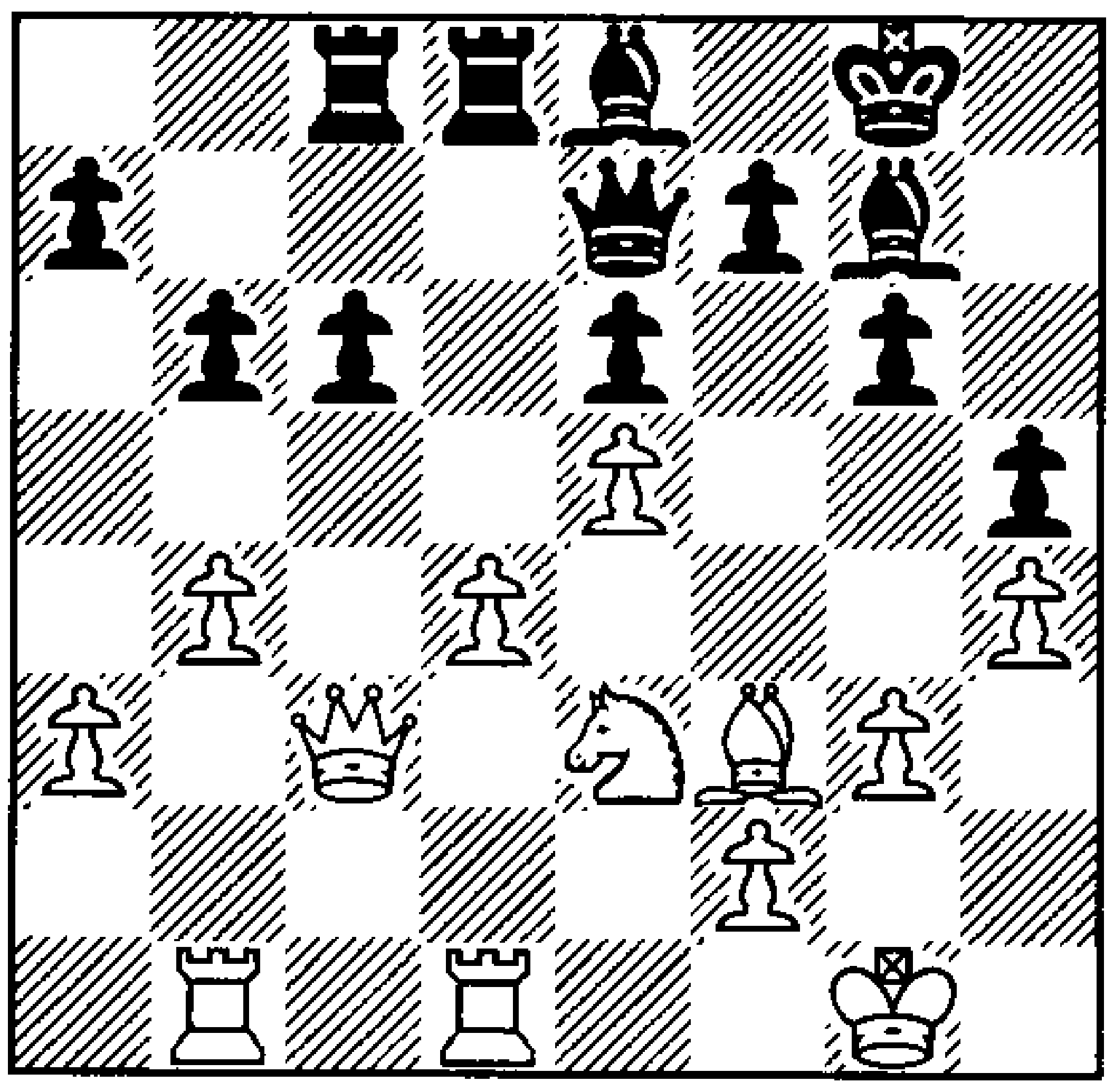
I agree with Alekhine: 'Disadvantageous, as his king's bishop will now be put temporarily out of play. Correct was 23...♖c7 and if 24 ♗g2 then 24...♗f6 25 e5 ♗e7 26 ♖bc1 ♕c8, after which Black could quietly wait for further developments.'

24 h4! ♗h6 25 ♘e5 (with the threat of 26 ♘g4) **25...g6 26 ♘g4?!**

Returning the compliment. 'Now it is White's turn to miss the best move! After 26 ♘c4! ♗g7 (*26...b5? 27 ♘e3 – G. K.*) 27 e5 h5 28 ♘d6 Black would have nothing better than to start to fight for a draw by sacrificing the exchange for a pawn: 28...♖xd6 29 exd6 ♕xd6 30 ♕c4! etc. with a clear advantage.' (Alekhine) In my opinion, 30 ♖bc1 is also good.

It is significant that Capablanca underestimated the latent dynamics of this position and nevertheless was unable to prevent ...c6-c5. In this match he generally sensed dynamics worse than his opponent and played more static chess, trying to break up large-scale problems into small ones and to solve them easily by parts.

26...♗g7 27 e5 (27 ♘e3? c5) **27...h5** (but not 27...c5? 28 bxc5 bxc5 29 ♖b7 ♕f8 30 ♖c1 winning a pawn) **28 ♘e3**



28...c5!

The dreams are realised! 'Black profits by the great opportunity to free at last his queen's bishop.' (Alekhine)

29 bxc5 (or 29 dxc5 bxc5 30 ♖xd8 ♕xd8 31 bxc5 ♕c7 equalising) **29...bxc5 30 d5?**

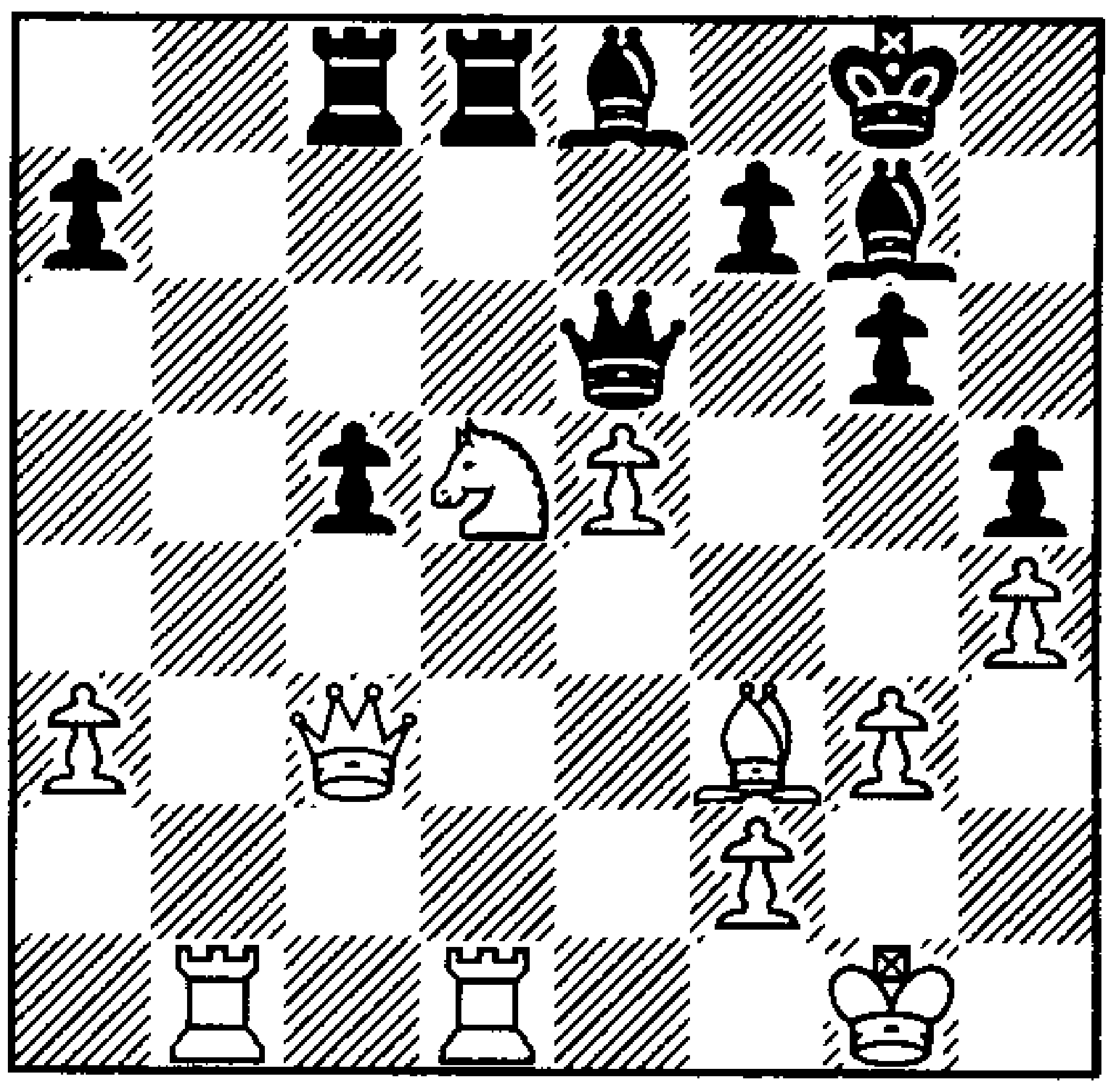
'This attempt to complicate matters – most unusual for Capablanca – turns decidedly to Black's advantage. An easy draw was obtainable by 30 ♖b7 ♖d7 31 ♖xd7 *(31 ♖db1 ♕d8 – G. K.)* 31...♗xd7 32 d5 (or 32 dxc5 ♗e8 33 c6 ♕c7 34 ♕c5 ♗xe5) 32...exd5 33 ♘xd5 ♕e6 34 ♘f4 ♗xe5 followed by a general liquidation and bishops of different colours.' (Alekhine) That is, 35 ♘xe6 ♗xc3 36 ♖xd7 fxe6 etc. Also possible is 30...♖c7 31 ♖xc7 ♕xc7 32 ♖c1 ♖c8 with approximate equality.

30...exd5 31 ♘xd5

After 31 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 32 ♘xd5 ♕e6 33 ♖b7 (Bernstein) there is 33...♗xe5 34 ♕c4 ♔g7 35 ♖xa7 ♗d4 with advantage to Black (Levenfish, Romanovsky).

31...♕e6

Of course, not 31...♕xe5? 32 ♕xe5 ♗xe5 because of 33 ♘e7+. But now White has definite problems.



32 ♘f6+

A check that was condemned by all the commentators. 'Comparatively better was 32 ♖b7 ♗xe5 33 ♕a5 ♔g7 34 ♖xa7 and Black's advantage – the pair of bishops – would not yet have been decisive.' (Alekhine) However, it seems to me that after 34...♗c6! he has too dominating a position and that Capa was right to give the knight check, at least trying to create some counterplay.

32...♗xf6 33 exf6 ♖xd1+ 34 ♖xd1 ♗c6!

'A quiet and very strong move.' (Bronstein) 'White cannot exchange the bishops, as in that case he would lose his only pride – the pawn at f6.' (Alekhine)

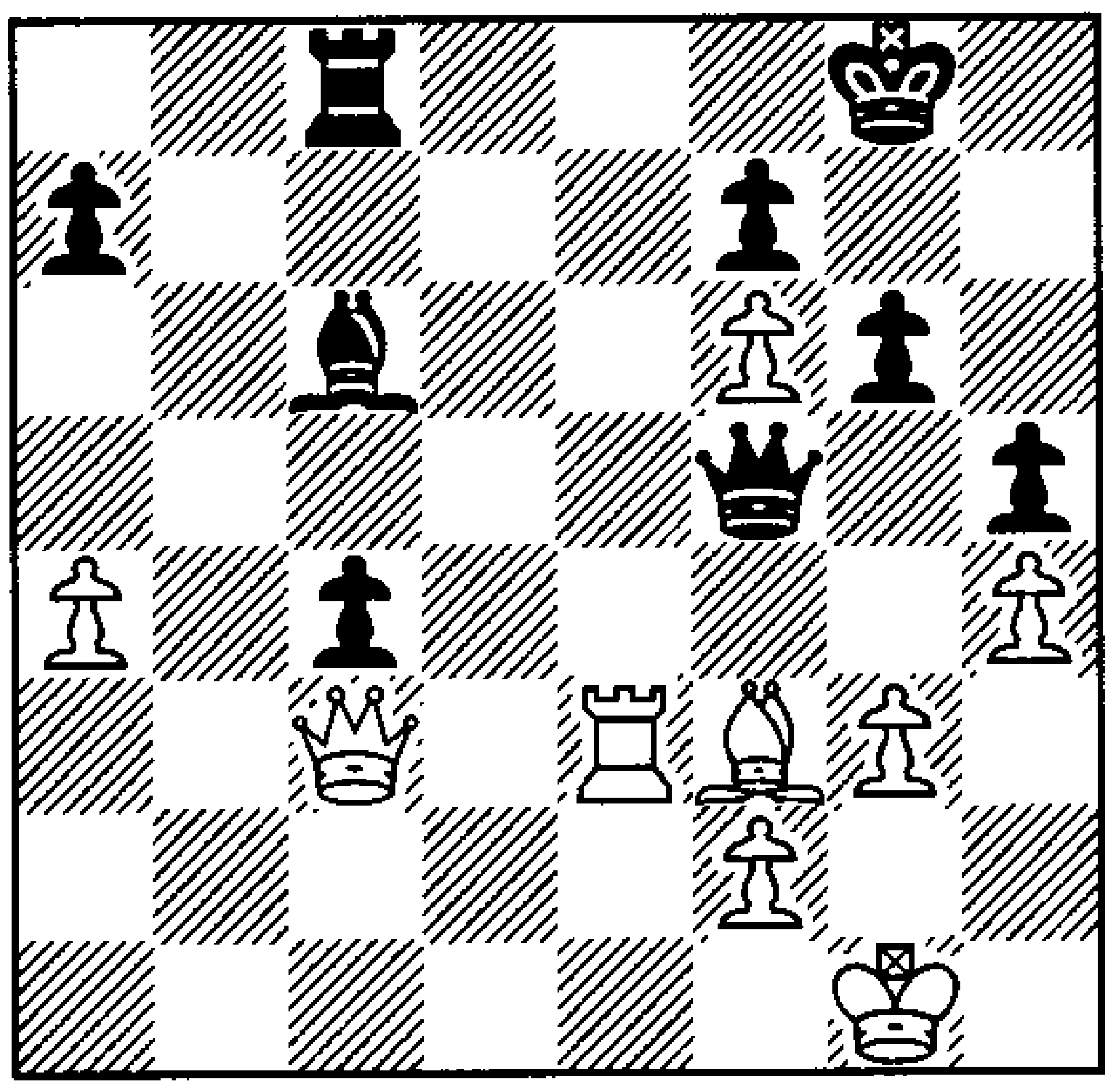
35 ♖e1

And yet 35 ♗xc6 came into consideration. The commentators rejected it because of 35...♖xc6 (after 35...♕xc6!? Black's advantage is slight) 36 ♖d8+ (36 ♖c1 c4) 36...♔h7, not noticing the idea of 37 ♕d2! (threatening 38 ♖h8+! ♔xh8 39 ♕h6+ and mate) 37...♕xf6 38 ♖d7 with counterplay, sufficient to regain the pawn: 38...♔g7! (38...c4 39 ♕d5 ♔g7 40 ♖xf7+!; 38...♖a6 39 ♕d5 ♔g7 40 ♕xc5 ♕a1+ 41 ♔g2 ♕xa3 42 ♕d4+!) 39 ♕d5 ♖c8 40 ♖xa7, and although after 40...c4 41 ♖a5 White has a rather unpleasant position, nevertheless things are closer to a draw.

Capa's psychological problem was that in all variations Black retains winning chances. I think that he grew nervous: he was trying to find where it was possible to save himself, and where it wasn't...

35...♕f5 36 ♖e3 (36 ♗xc6?! ♖xc6 37 ♖e5 ♕xf6 wins for Black) **36...c4!** (seizing space and planning ...a7-a5-a4) **37 a4?**

A more than dubious pawn sacrifice. 'Realising the inferiority of his position, White begins to "swindle".' (Alekhine)



37...a5?

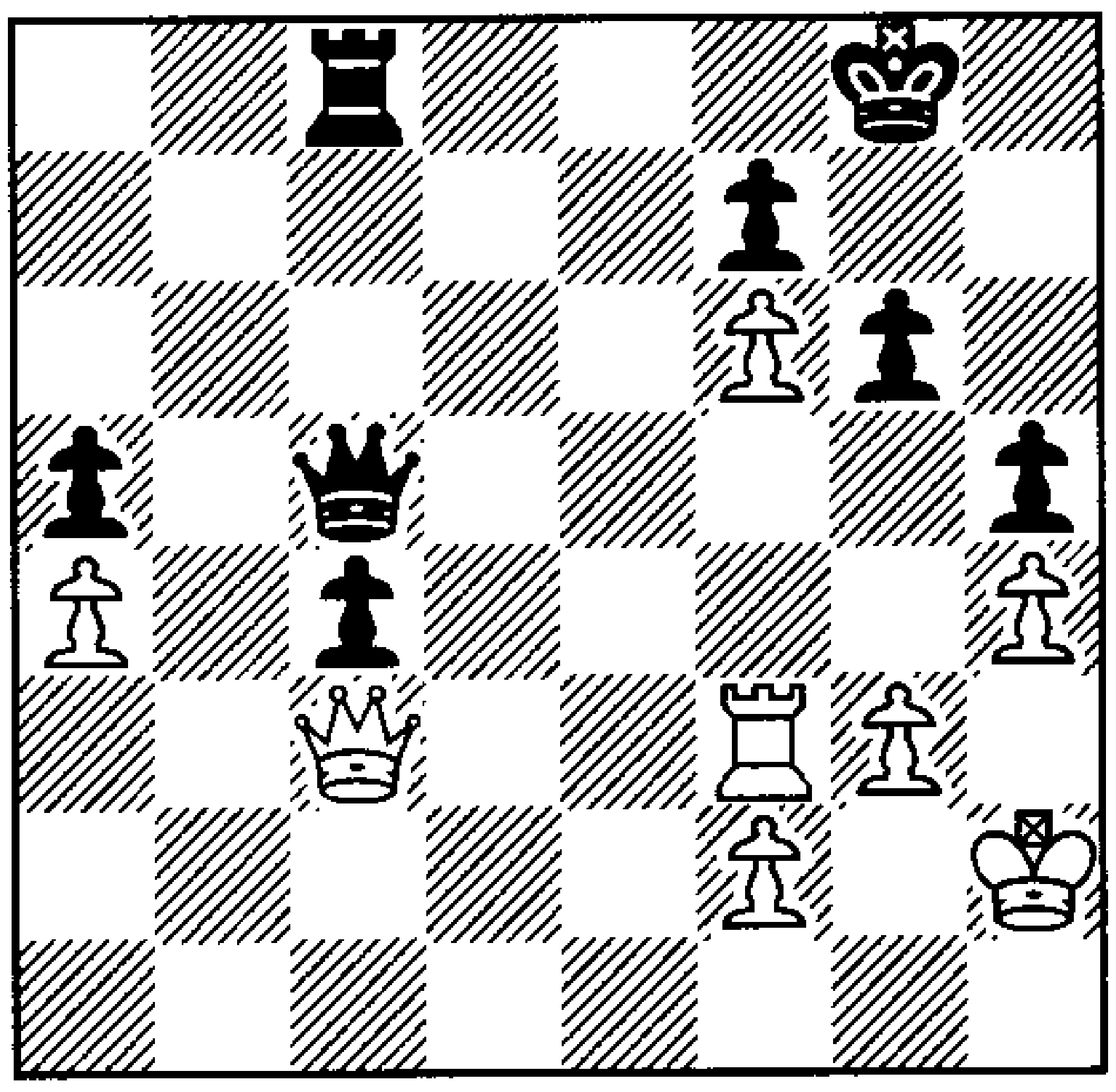
One senses the enormous nervous tension! Following Alekhine's example, everyone attaches an exclamation mark to this time-trouble move, apparently after heeding his warning: 'If 37...♗xa4, then 38 ♗e4 ♕g4 (38...♕d7 39 ♖f3 ♔h7 40 ♕e5 etc. would even lose) 39 ♗f3 ♕d7 40 ♖e7 ♕d3 41 ♕xd3 cxd3 42 ♖xa7 etc. with a draw in view.'

But I suggest precisely this move: 37...♗xa4! 38 ♗e4 (no better is 38 ♖e7 ♗c6 39 ♕xc4 ♕xf6 40 ♖e3 ♔g7) 38...♕d7! (38...♕c5!?) 39 ♖f3 ♗c6! (instead of 39...♔h7?) with an obvious advantage to Black: 40 ♕xc4? ♗b7! 41 ♕e2 ♕h3! wins or 40 ♕e3 ♕e8 41 ♖f4 a5 etc.

It is amazing that this was not noticed by Alekhine! Intuitively he decided not to take the pawn for the moment, but to fix it: let it hang there. And, incidentally, in the end it was precisely this 'hanging' pawn that played on Capablanca's nerves and led to his defeat.

38 ♗g2 ♗xg2 39 ♔xg2 ♕d5+ 40 ♔h2 ♕f5 41 ♖f3 ♕c5

Here the game was adjourned. According to Alekhine, his earlier games with Janowski (Hastings 1925/26) and Colle (Scarborough 1926) had given him 'the opportunity to study the struggle of queen and rook against the opponent's queen and rook, and my knowledge in this field came in very useful in the match with Capablanca.'



42 ♖f4!

On the resumption the world champion demonstrates the best defence. 'After 42 ♖e3 ♕b6 (*42...♕b4!? – G. K.*) White would not have any useful move at his disposal (43 ♖f3 ♕c6! etc.).' (Alekhine)

42...♔h7

'This was not necessary here: it was much more important to prevent White's next move by 42...♕b6.' (Alekhine) I agree. But after 42...♕b4? 43 ♕e3! ♕xa4 a strong response is 44 ♖g4! (but not 44 ♖xc4? ♖xc4 45 ♕h6 ♖xh4+!, and 44 ♖f5 ♕e8!? 45 ♖e5 ♕d8 46 ♖xh5 ♕xf6 47 ♖xa5 c3 is also not so clear) 44...♕e8 45 ♕h6 ♕f8 46 ♖xg6+ with a draw.

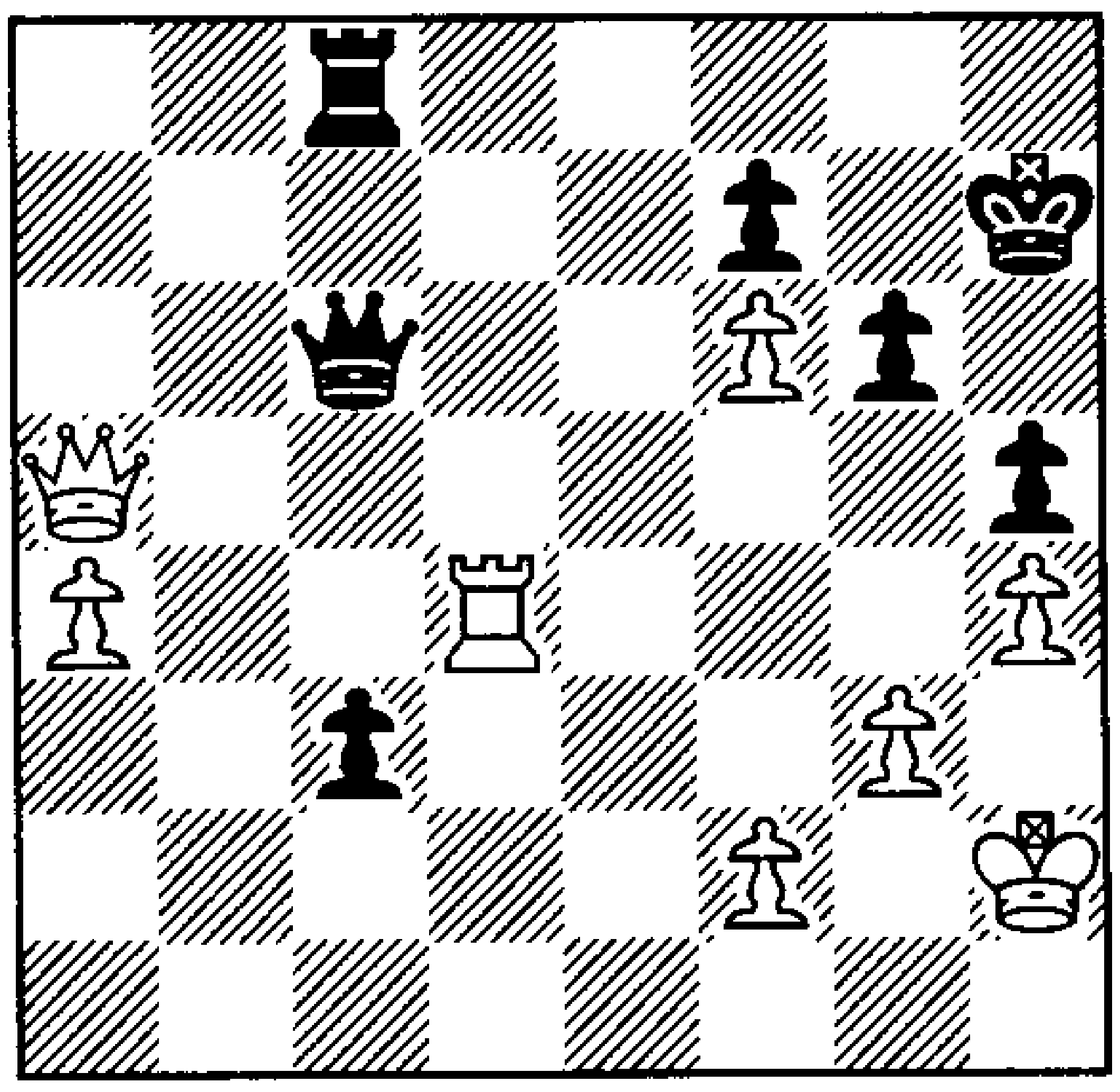
43 ♖d4! ♕c6?

'A miscalculation, after which White could have saved the game. Correct was still 43...♕b6! and if 44 ♖f4 then 44...♔g8 obtaining the same position as he could have had two moves earlier.' (Alekhine) And indeed, after 45 ♔g1 ♕b4 46 ♕e3 ♕xa4 White faces difficult problems – 47 ♖f5? does not work because of 47...♕d1+ 48 ♔h2 gxf5, for example: 49 ♕g5+ ♔f8 50 ♕g7+ ♔e8 51 ♕g8+ ♔d7 52 ♕xf7+ ♔d6 53 ♕e7+ ♔c6 winning.

44 ♕xa5

Launching a counterattack which is sufficient for a draw. 'During his adjournment analysis Capablanca found an amazing defence. And therefore he is not afraid of the seemingly inevitable advance of Black's passed pawn to the queening square.' (Bronstein)

44...c3 (44...♕xf6 45 ♖f4 ♕e6 46 ♕c3 leads to a draw)



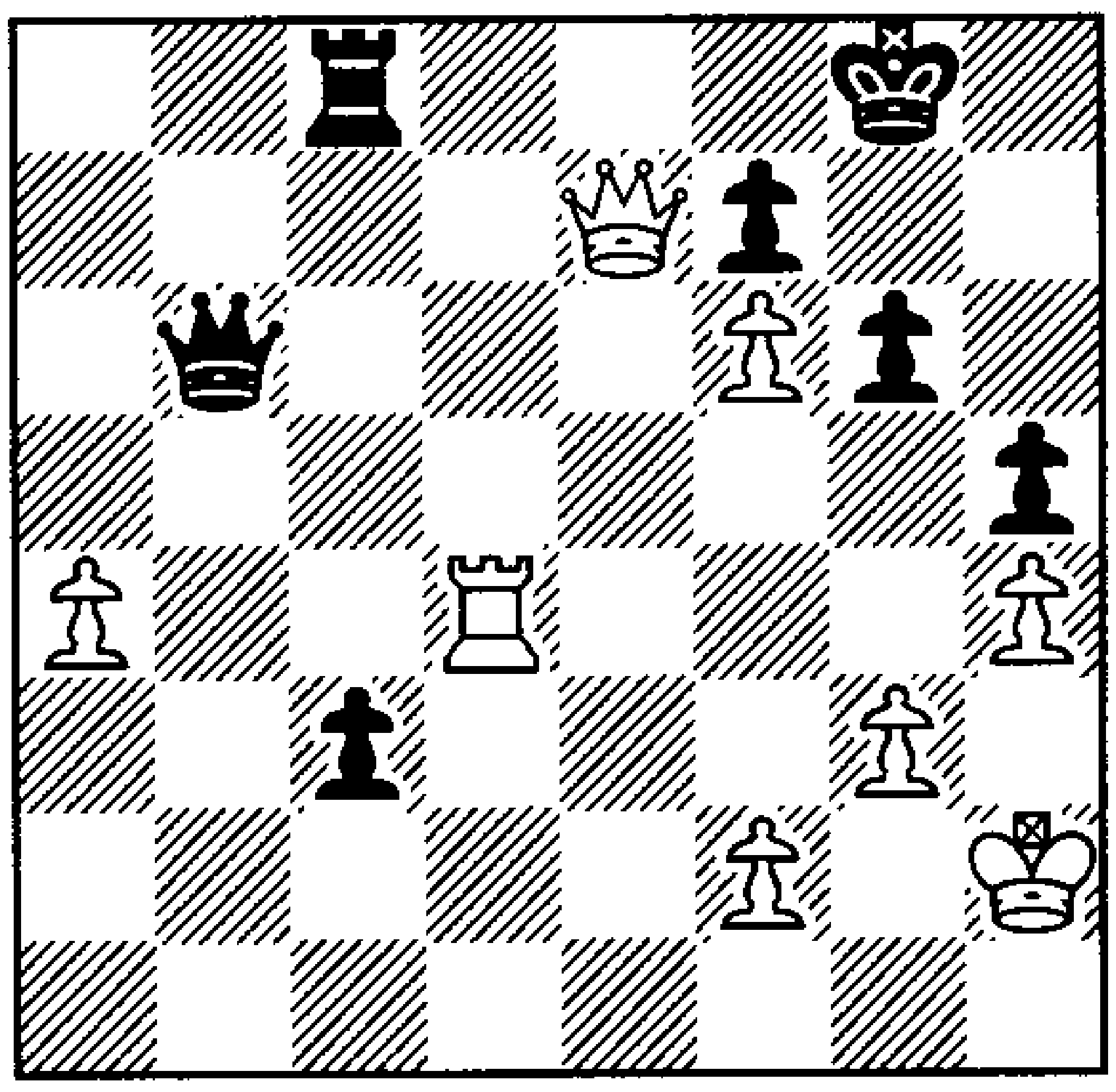
45 ♕a7! ♔g8

The only chance – and, amazingly, it worked! The challenger thought over this move for... 1 hour 5 minutes!

In his earlier calculations Alekhine had been relying on 45...♖c7 46 ♕b8 c2 *(46...♕xf6 47 ♕xc7 ♕xf2+ 48 ♔h1 ♕xd4 49 ♕xf7+ – G. K.)* 47 ♖d8 ♕xf6, but had overlooked 48 ♖h8+!! ♕xh8 49 ♕xc7 with a draw (49...♕b2 50 ♕xf7+). In addition he gives the variations 45...♕c7 46 ♕xc7 ♖xc7 47 ♖d1 and 45...♕xf6 *(? – G. K.)* 46 ♖f4 ♕xf4 47 gxf4 c2 48 ♕xf7+ ♔h6 49 f5! 'with a draw', but here White even wins: 49...gxf5 50 ♕f6+ ♔h7 51 ♕xf5+ or 49...♖c6 50 ♕e8.

46 ♕e7 ♕b6

After 46...c2? White would have forced a draw by 47 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 48 ♕xd8+ ♔h7 49 ♕e7 ♕e6 50 ♕c7. But now one of the key moments of the game, and of the entire match, has been reached.



47 ♕d7?

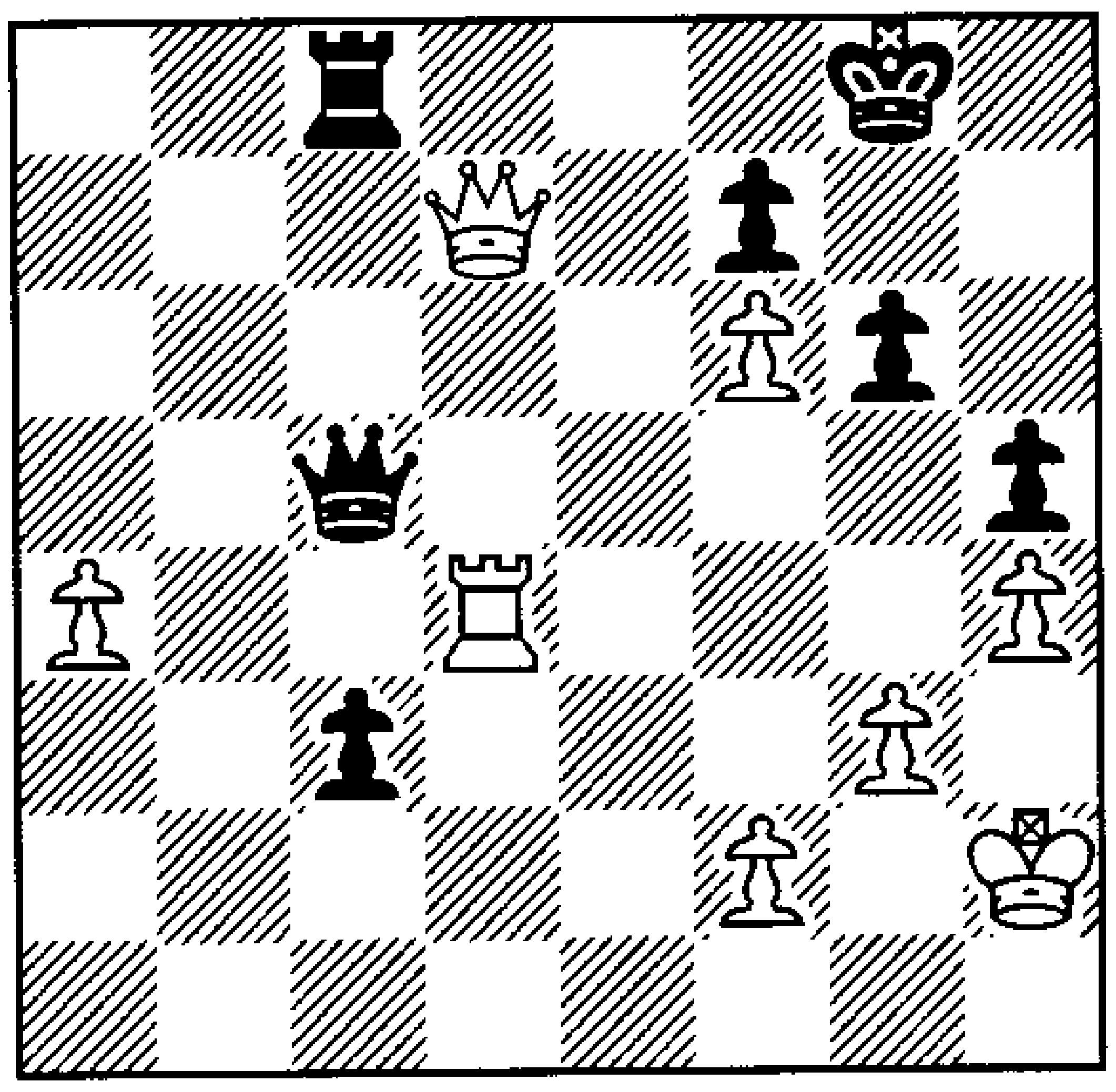
'Capablanca does not take full advantage of the opportunity given to him by my 43rd move. By playing 47 ♖d7! he could have obtained a draw, as after 47...♕xf2+ (if 47...♖f8 then 48 a5 ♕xa5 49 ♖a7 ♕d5 50 ♖d7 and the white rook, because of the threat ♕xf8+! would eternally persecute the queen) 48 ♔h1! (48 ♔h3 would lose, as in the main variation the black queen would reach the square e6 with check) 48...♕a2 *(48...♕f1+ 49 ♔h2 ♕c4 50 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 51 ♕xd8+ ♔h7 52 ♕f8 – G. K.)* 49 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 50 ♕xd8+ ♔h7 51 ♕f8 and there would not be anything better than perpetual, White's f6-pawn remaining invulnerable. A most unusual escape!' (Alekhine)

I would add that after 47...♖f8 White is also saved by both the cold-blooded 48 ♔g2 ♕c6+ 49 ♔h2 c2 50 ♖d8, and by Tarrasch's spectacular 48 ♕e3!! ♕xf6 (48...♕c6? 49 ♖c7!) 49 ♖c7.

However, although 47 ♕d7 seriously complicates White's task, it does not yet lose the game. But it is here that the source of Capa's defeat is concealed: he did not want to allow the 'unclear' ...♕xf2. How horrible to have to calculate all these sharp variations! And suppose there might be a mate there?!

47...♕c5!

'I overlooked this simple reply.' (Capablanca) It unexpectedly transpires that the pawn has to be given up all the same, only in a far worse version.

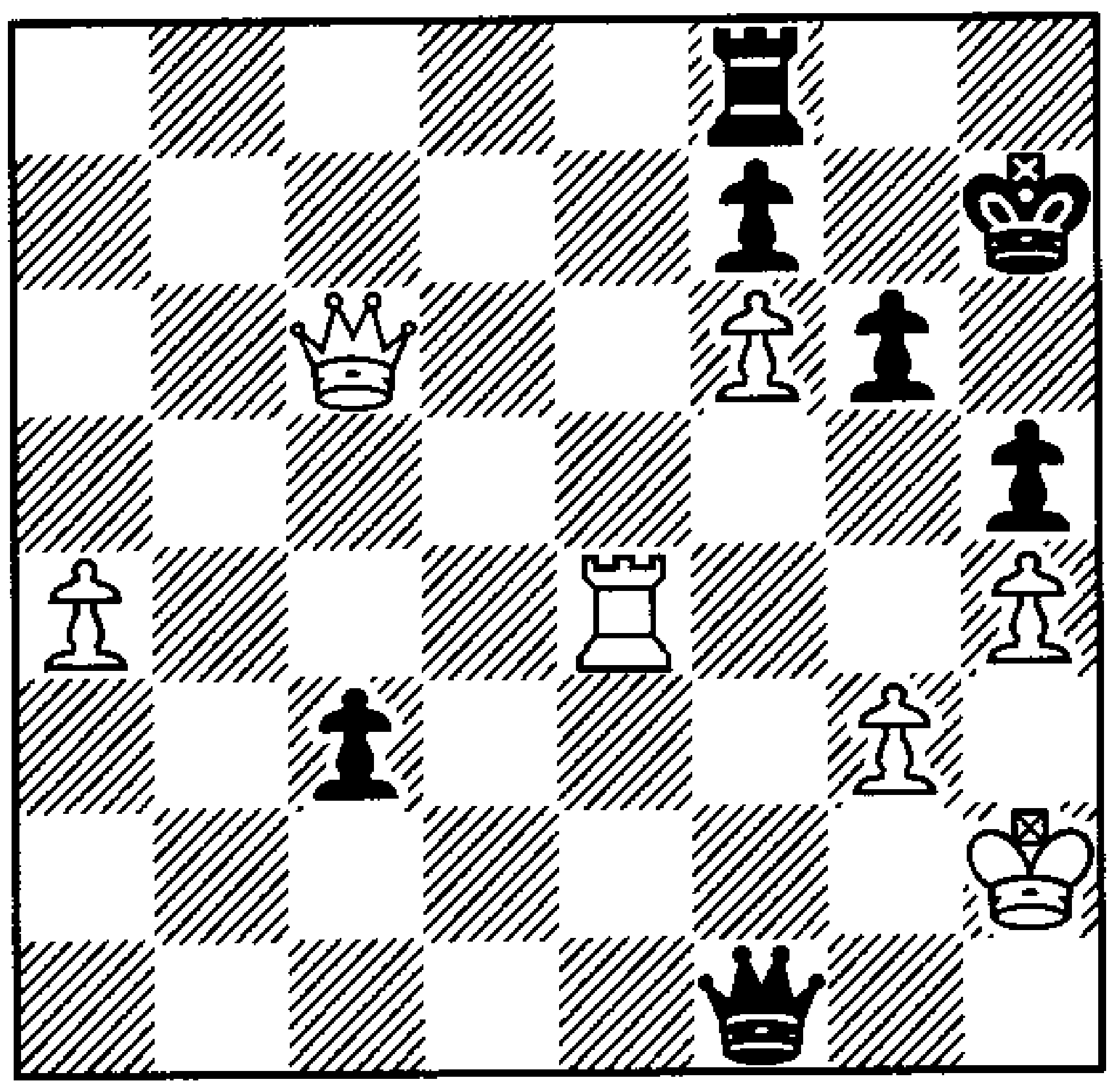


48 ♖e4! ♕xf2+ (but not 48...c2? 49 ♖e8+ ♖xe8 50 ♕xe8+ ♕f8 51 ♕c6) **49 ♔h3 ♕f1+ 50 ♔h2 ♕f2+ 51 ♔h3 ♖f8 52 ♕c6!** (again the only move) **52...♕f1+ 53 ♔h2 ♕f2+ 54 ♔h3 ♕f1+**

'Even better was 54...♕f3, threatening 55...♖d8; if White then tried to free his position with 55 ♖c4, the attempt would be refuted by 55...♕f1+ 56 ♔h2 ♖d8.' (Alekhine) But 55 ♔h2! leads to roughly the same situation as in the game.

55 ♔h2 ♔h7

Threatening ...♖d8 or ...♖b8 with a mating attack.



56 ♕c4?

'And again, the only move,' writes Alekhine, ignoring 56 ♖e7! (but not 56 ♕xc3? ♕f2+ 57 ♔h1 ♖b8!), and after 56...♕f2+ 57 ♔h3 c2 White has time to play 58 ♖c7 ♖d8 59 ♕xc2 with a draw. A familiar picture: a rigorous move is required of Capa, but he makes a 'natural' one, after which, apparently, his position is already lost.

56...♕f2+ 57 ♔h3 ♕g1!

'The decisive manoeuvre. As an alternative 57...c2 would be insufficient because of 58 ♖f4! followed by ♖f1.' (Alekhine) Or 57...♕xf6? 58 ♖f4 ♕g7 59 ♖f3 drawing.

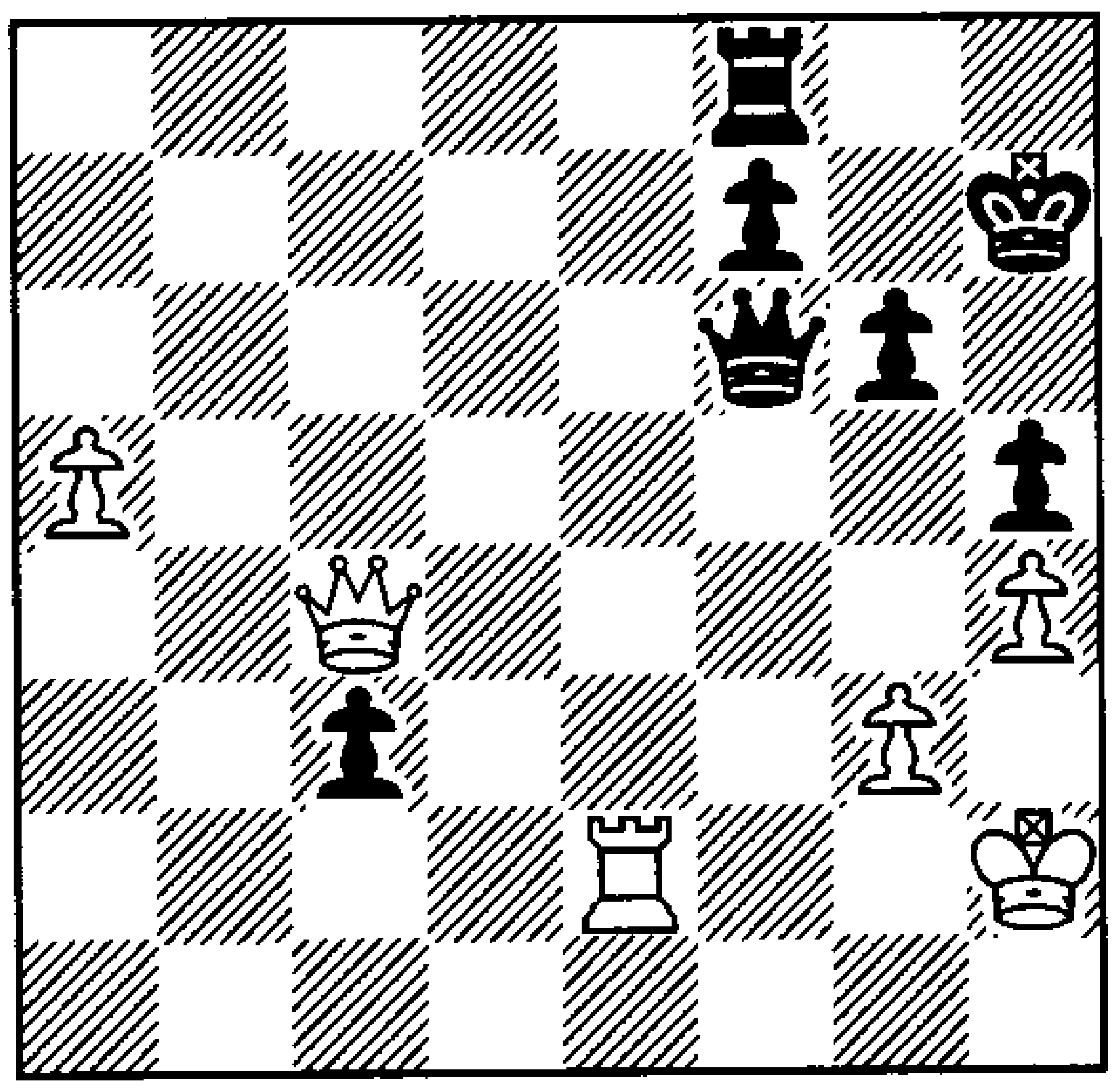
58 ♖e2

After 58 g4 Alekhine gave a genuinely very pretty win: 58...c2! 59 ♕xc2 ♖e8!! Such tricks he didn't overlook! For example: 60 ♕c7 (60 ♖xe8? hxg4 mate) 60...hxg4+ 61 ♖xg4 ♖e3+ 62 ♖g3 ♕h1+ 63 ♔g4 ♖e4+ and it's all over.

58...♕f1+?

A second time-trouble and... nerves, nerves! Black picks up the f6-pawn in unfavourable circumstances. 'The right sequence of moves (which I actually intended by playing 57...♕g1!) was 58...♕h1+ 59 ♖h2 ♕f3!, after which White could not play 60 ♖c2? because of 60...♕f5+; and he would be helpless against the threat of 60...♕xf6 etc. If 60 ♕f4, then 60...♕d1! etc.' (Alekhine) (*followed by 61 ♕c7 ♕g4+ 62 ♔g2 ♕e2+ 63 ♔h3 ♕e6+ 64 ♔g2 ♖c8 – G. K.*). For example: 60 ♖e2 ♕xf6 61 ♔g2 ♖b8! and wins.

59 ♔h2 ♕xf6 (59...♔h6 60 ♕f4+) **60 a5?**

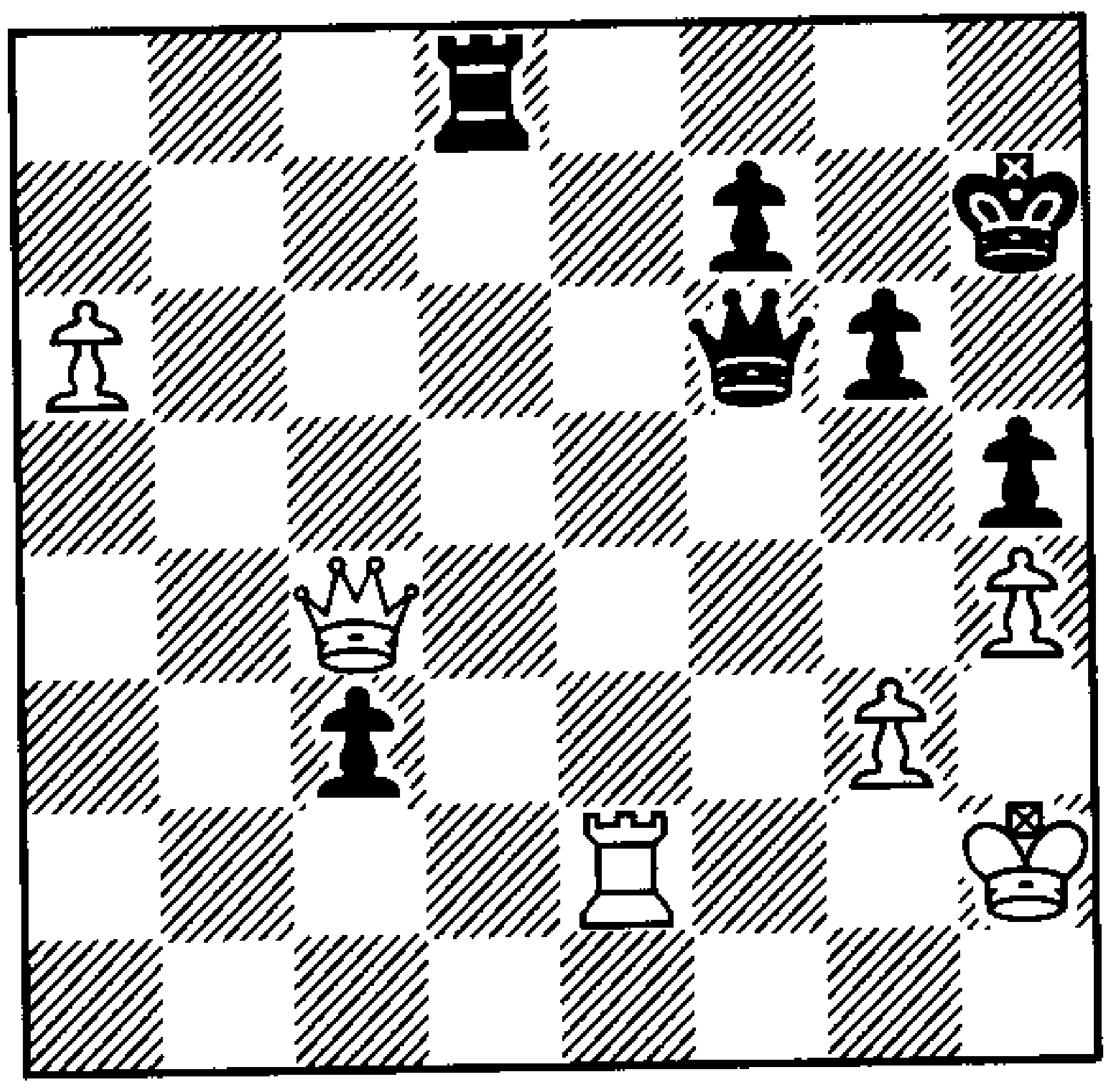


Also nerves! 'Instead of securing the draw by 60 ♖c2 ♖e8 61 ♔g2 (threatening either 62 ♖xc3 or 62 ♖f2) Capablanca commits another error and should now lose instantly.' (Alekhine) I think that in the time scramble the Cuban did not see 61 ♔g2! (but not 61 ♕xc3? ♖e2+!), since in the other variations with 60 ♖c2 it is all very simple: 60...♖b8 61 ♕xc3 ♕f1 62 ♕c4!, or 60...♖d8 61 ♕xc3 ♕f1 62 ♖d2! ♕e1 (62...♖e8 63 ♕d3) 63 ♖c2.

60...♖d8?!

'An immediate decision could be obtained by 60...♕f1! 61 ♕e4 ♖d8 or 61...♖b8. After the text move the win should become again quite a problem.' (Alekhine) But, it would appear, not yet an insoluble one...

61 a6?



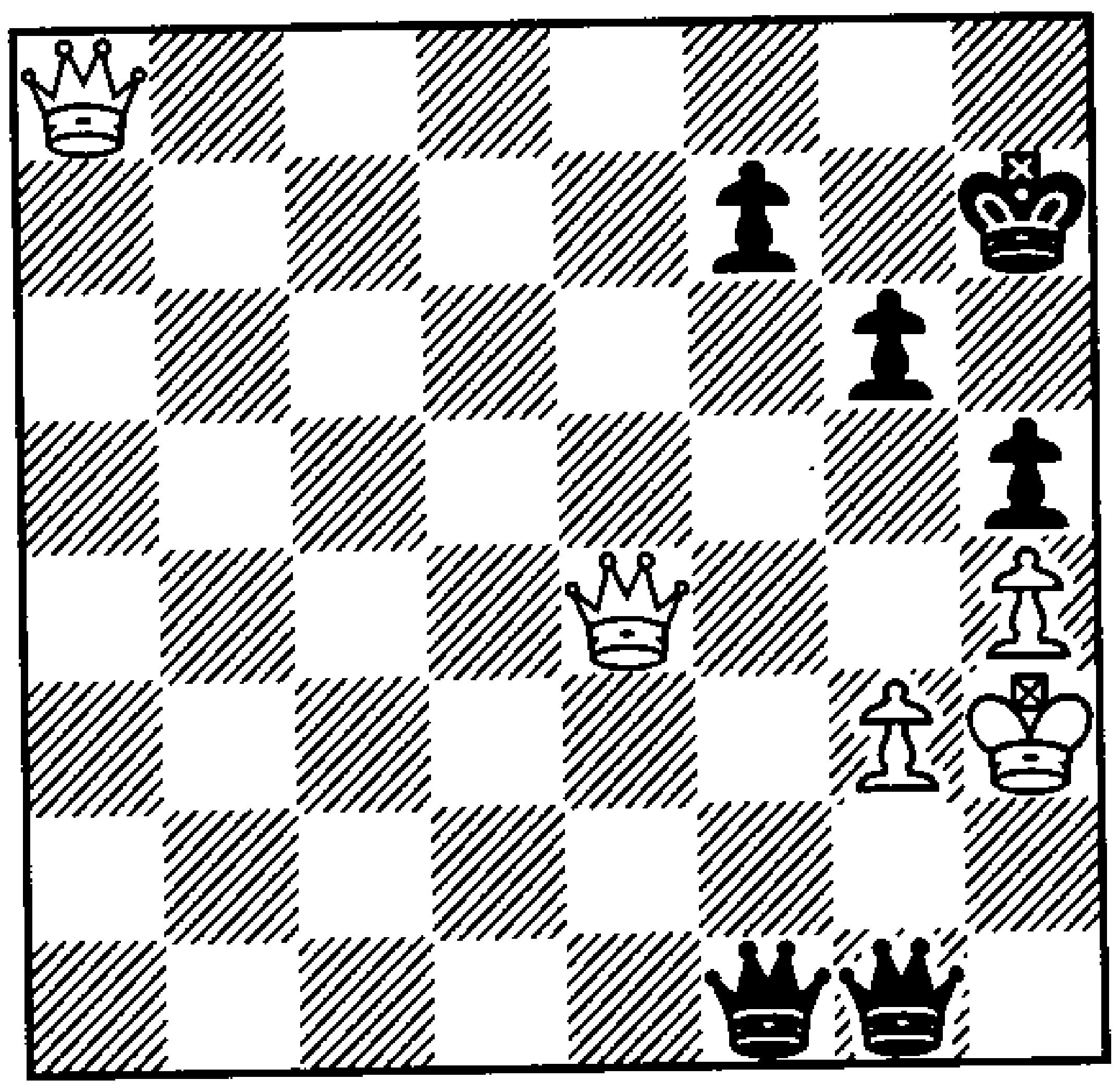
The utterly worn-out Capablanca makes a final mistake. He was clearly not accustomed to such fierce resistance: his opponent was all the time seeking paradoxical ideas! Capa was a champion of classical wrestling, whereas in this match Alekhine employed methods from unarmed self-defence or karate...

'After 61 ♔g2 Black could only obtain a queen's ending with three pawns against two, which, with the right defence, would normally be drawn. But even so, Black should gradually be able to win: 61...♔g7 62 a6 ♖d1 63 ♖f2 ♖d2 64 ♖xd2 (not 64 ♕c5? ♖xf2+ 65 ♕xf2 ♕c6+ 66 ♕f3 ♕xf3+ 67 ♔xf3 c2 68 a7 c1♕ 69 a8♕ ♕h1+) 64...cxd2 65 ♕d5! ♕b2 66 ♔h3 ♕c2 67 a7 ♕f5+! (*voluntarily spoiling his pawns!* – *G. K.*) 68 ♕xf5 gxf5 69 a8♕ d1♕.' (Alekhine) I agree: 70 ♕g2 ♕g4+ 71 ♔h2 f4! 72 gxf4 ♕xg2+ 73 ♔xg2 ♔g6 74 ♔g3 ♔f5 75 ♔f3 f6 winning.

61...♕f1! (finally there comes a highly dramatic finish) **62 ♕e4**

Or 62 a7 ♖d2! 63 ♖xd2 ♕xc4 64 a8♕ (64 ♖c2 ♕a4) 64...cxd2.

62...♖d2 63 ♖xd2 cxd2 64 a7 d1♕ 65 a8♕ ♕g1+ 66 ♔h3 ♕df1+ 0-1



If 67 ♕g2 ♕h1 mate. A similar mate with two queens could have occurred with me against Karpov in the 22nd game of our return match in 1986, but Karpov did not take things that far, deviated and lost differently. But Capablanca was so shocked that he played on until mate! 'Alekhine played the finish excellently. I am not able to win like that,' he admitted after the game.

But Alekhine himself was rather self-critical: 'In my opinion this game has been praised too much, the whole world over. It was doubtless very exciting both for the players – who were continuously short of time – and the public. But its final part represents a true comedy of errors in which my opponent several times missed a draw and I missed about the same number of winning opportunities. In short, but for its outstanding sporting importance (it became, in fact, the crucial point of the match) I would hardly have included in this collection of my best games.'

The scores became equal: 2-2. In the 12th game, also a rather complicated one, the nervous fatigue of the two players told: there were again rather a lot of mistakes. Capablanca seized the initiative, played with intensity and inventiveness, and had winning chances. But, apparently still in a 'groggy' state, he was again the last to make a mistake...

Game 126

A.Alekhine-J.R.Capablanca

World Championship Match,
Buenos Aires 1927, 12th game
Queen's Gambit D64

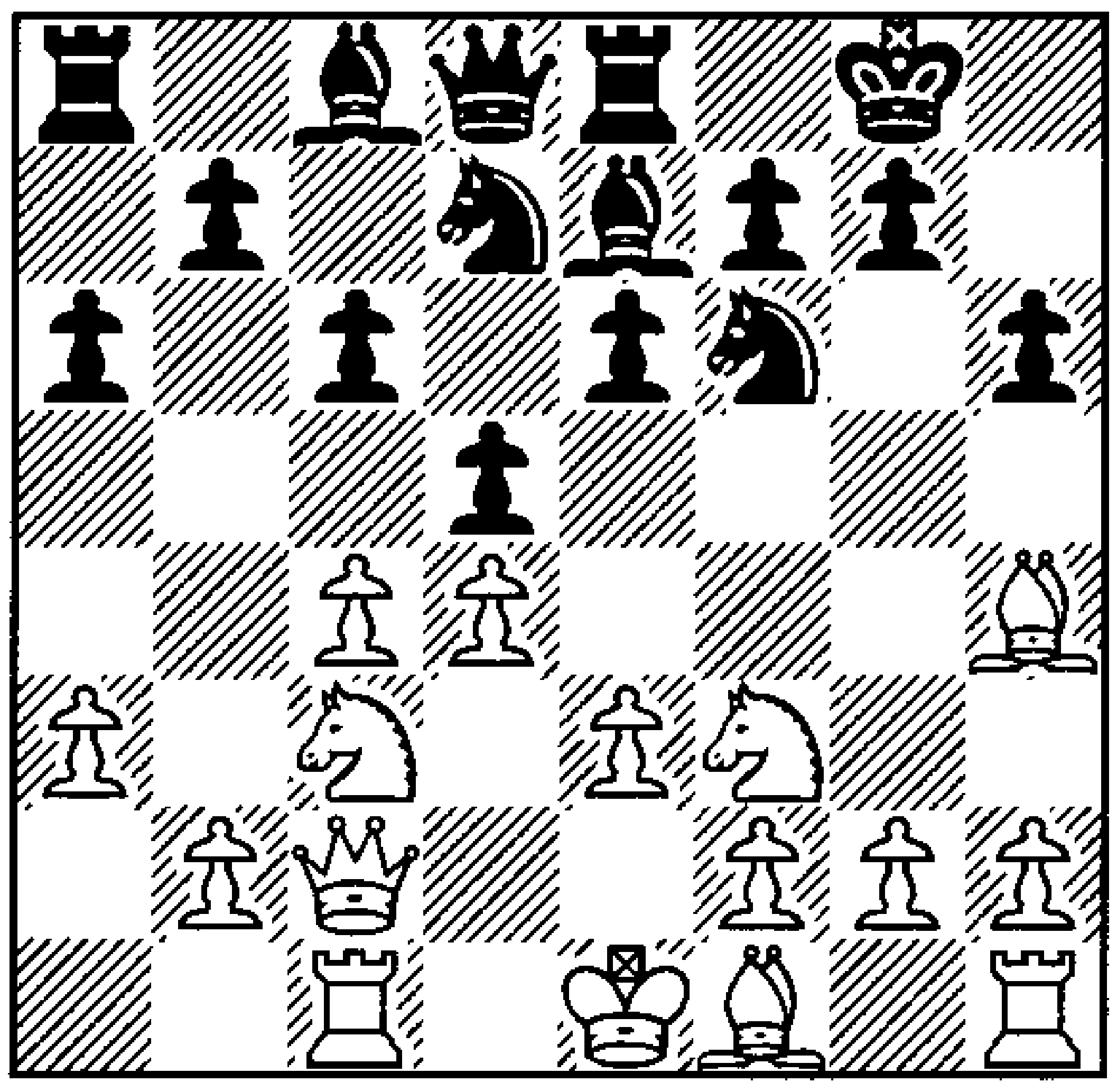
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♗g5 ♘bd7 5 e3 ♗e7 6 ♘f3 0-0 7 ♖c1 c6 (7...a6) **8 ♕c2 a6 9 a3**

The second game went 9 cxd5 (9 a4 – *Game No.121*) 9...♘xd5!? 10 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 11 ♗e2 (11 ♗c4!? Alekhine-Vidmar, Hastings 1936/37) 11...♖e8 12 0-0 ♘xc3 13 ♕xc3 e5 14 ♖fd1 exd4 (14...e4!? 15 ♘d2 ♘f6 Rubinstein) 15 ♘xd4 ♘f6 16 ♗f3 ♗g4 17 ♗xg4 ♘xg4 18 ♘f5 ♕f6 19 ♕xf6 ♘xf6 ½-½, although after 20 ♘d6 ♖e7 21 e4! White would have retained a slight advantage.

9...h6

The alternative is 9...♖e8!? 10 ♗d3 (10 cxd5 ♘xd5!) 10...h6 11 ♗f4 dxc4 12 ♗xc4 b5 13 ♗e2 ♗b7 14 0-0 c5 15 dxc5 ♘xc5 16 ♖fd1 ♕b6 17 ♗e5 ♖ac8 18 ♗d4 (the fourth game, with the bishop on a2, went 18 ♕e2 ♘ce4 with equal chances) 18...♗xf3 19 ♗xf3 ♕b8 20 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 21 ♕b1 ♖ec8 22 ♘e4 ½-½ (26th game).

10 ♗h4 ♖e8



11 ♖d1?!

A strange move in the opening. The struggle for a tempo? But 'The arrival of the rook on the d-file is now too late.' (Alekhine) 11 ♗d3 has also been played (*Game No.120*), but best of all is 11 cxd5! exd5 (11...♘xd5 12 ♗g3!) 12 ♗d3, for example: 12...♘h5 13 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 14 0-0 ♘hf6 (14th game) 15 b4! followed by ♘a4-c5, a3-a4 etc.

11...b5!

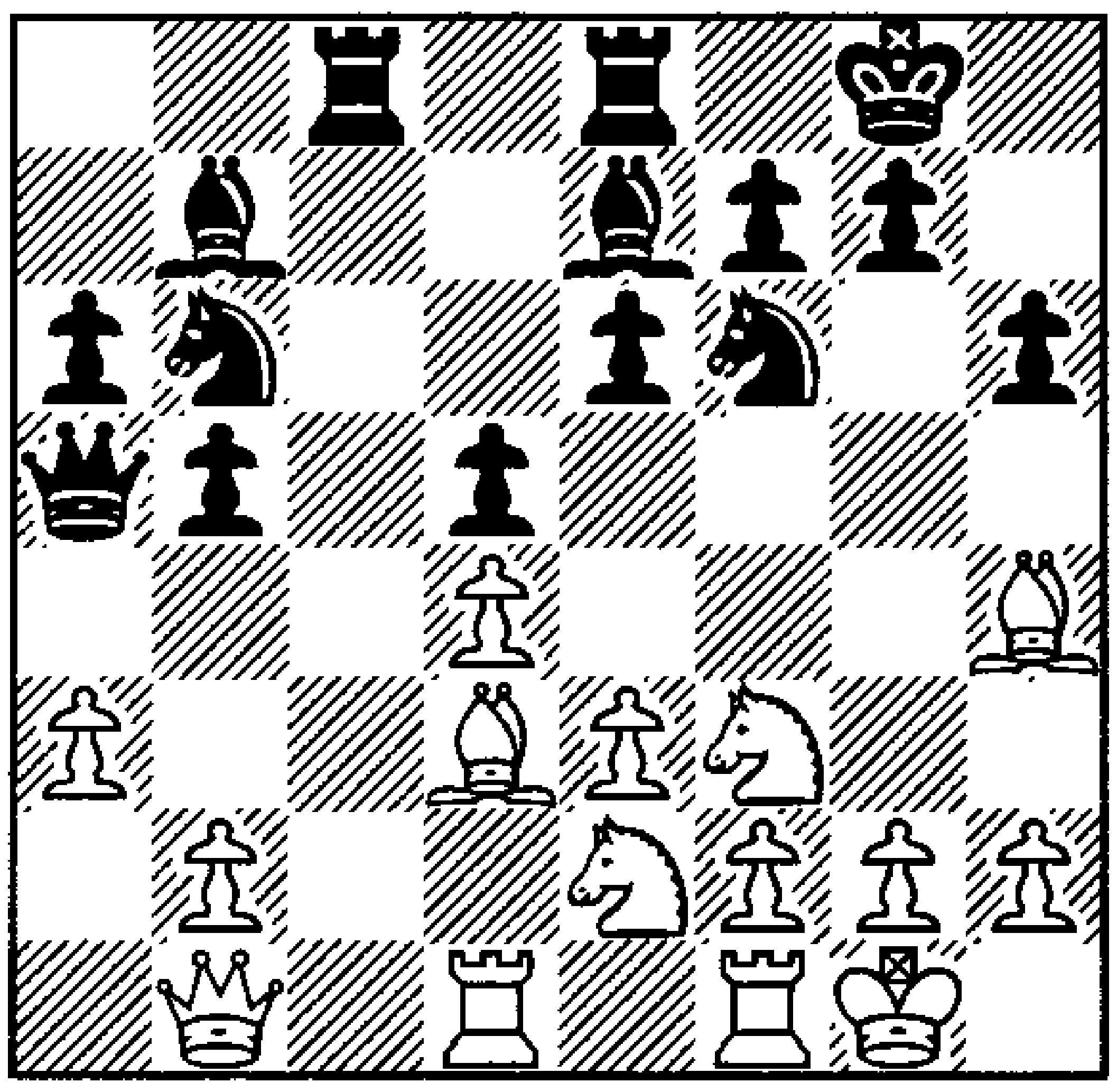
The routine 11...dxc4?! 12 ♗xc4 b5 13 ♗d3 c5 would have justified White's idea: 14 ♗xf6! ♘xf6 15 dxc5.

12 cxb5

'The constricting move 12 c5 would not be effective, for Black frees his game by the well known manoeuvre 12...e5 13 dxe5 ♘g4 14 ♗g3 ♗xc5, a likely continuation being 15 h3 ♘gxe5 16 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 17 ♘xd5 cxd5 18 ♕xc5 ♗b7 (*18...♕a5+!? – G. K.*), with good play for his pieces.' (Alekhine)

12...cxb5 13 ♗d3 ♗b7 14 0-0 ♖c8 15 ♕b1 ♕a5 (after 15...♗xa3?, apart from Alekhine's 16 bxa3 ♖xc3 17 a4!, also possible is 16 ♘xb5) **16 ♘e2 ♘b6?**

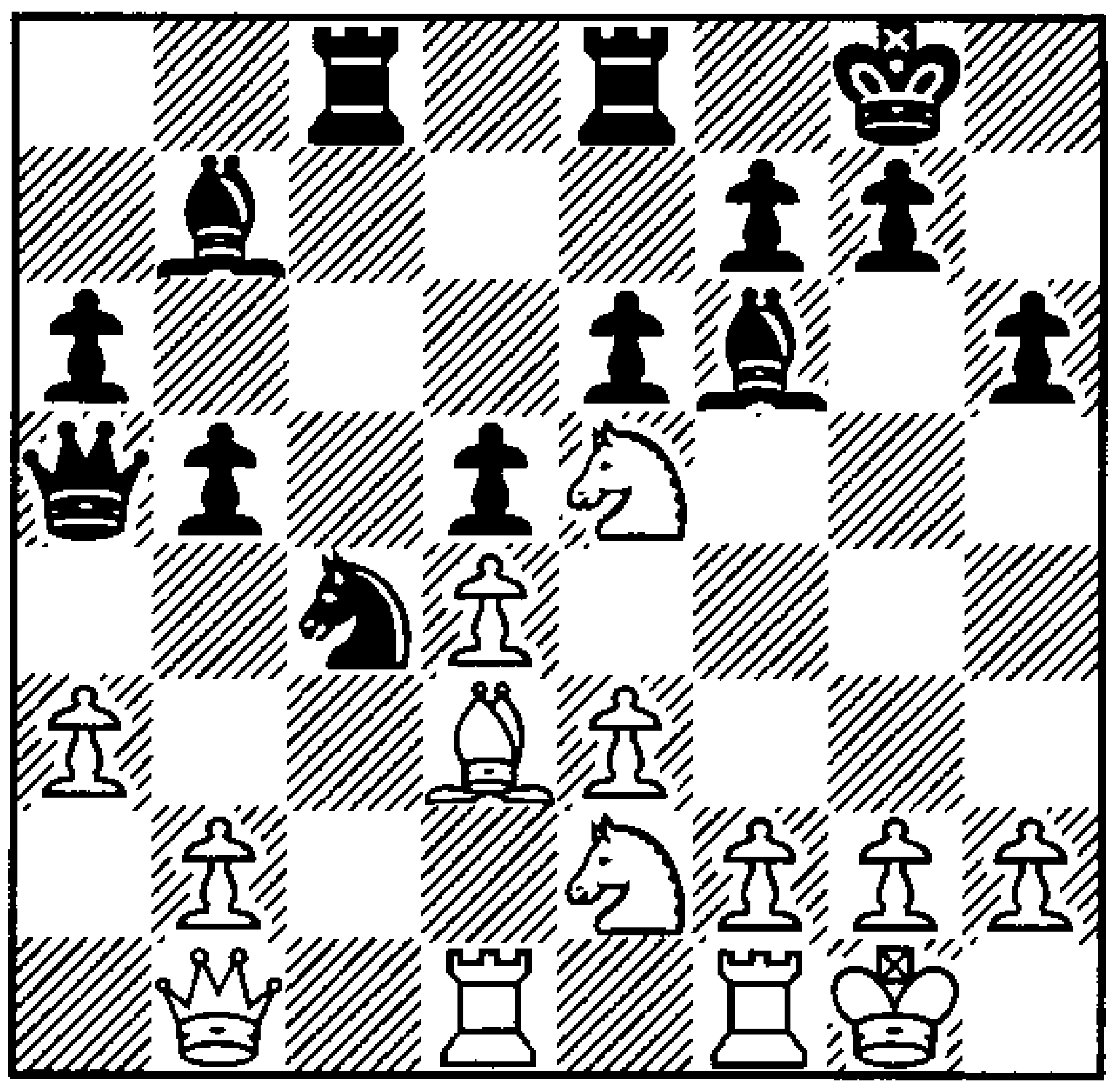
'A mistake. 16...b4 was a good continuation.' (Alekhine) After this the position would have simplified somewhat, but even so would have remained quite complicated – 17 ♘e5, for example, was possible.



17 ♘e5?

A very important moment! 'With this White not only misses an excellent winning chance, but even incurs a disadvantage himself. Instead of this he could have exploited the temporary obstruction of the black queen as follows: 17 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 18 b4 ♕a4 (18...♕xa3 leads to a rapid defeat after 19 ♗h7+ ♔h8 20 ♖d3! ♕a4 21 ♘c3) 19 ♖d2 ♘c4 20 ♖a2 ♗e7 21 ♕a1 ♘b6 22 ♖b1 followed by ♘c3 and White wins. It is clear from this variation that on move 17 Black would have had to recapture on f6 with the pawn rather than the bishop, but that would have left his king's position in considerable danger, e.g. 17...gxf6 18 ♘f4 ♘c4 (18...f5 is also inadequate because of 19 g4! fxg4 20 ♘e5 with a decisive attack, and 18...♘d7 will not do either, because of 19 e4 ♕c7 20 ♘h5 with a clear positional advantage for White) 19 ♘xe6! fxe6 20 ♗xc4 bxc4 (20...dxc4 is answered by 21 ♕g6+ ♔h8 22 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 23 ♕g6+ ♔h8 24 d5!, and 20...♖xc4 by 21 ♕g6+ ♔f8 22 ♘e5! fxe5 23 f4, in each case with a winning advantage for White) 21 ♕g6+ ♔h8 22 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 23 ♕g6+ ♔h8 24 ♘h4, threatening both 25 ♕f7, and 25 f4 with ♖f3, and a penetrating attack.' (Alekhine)

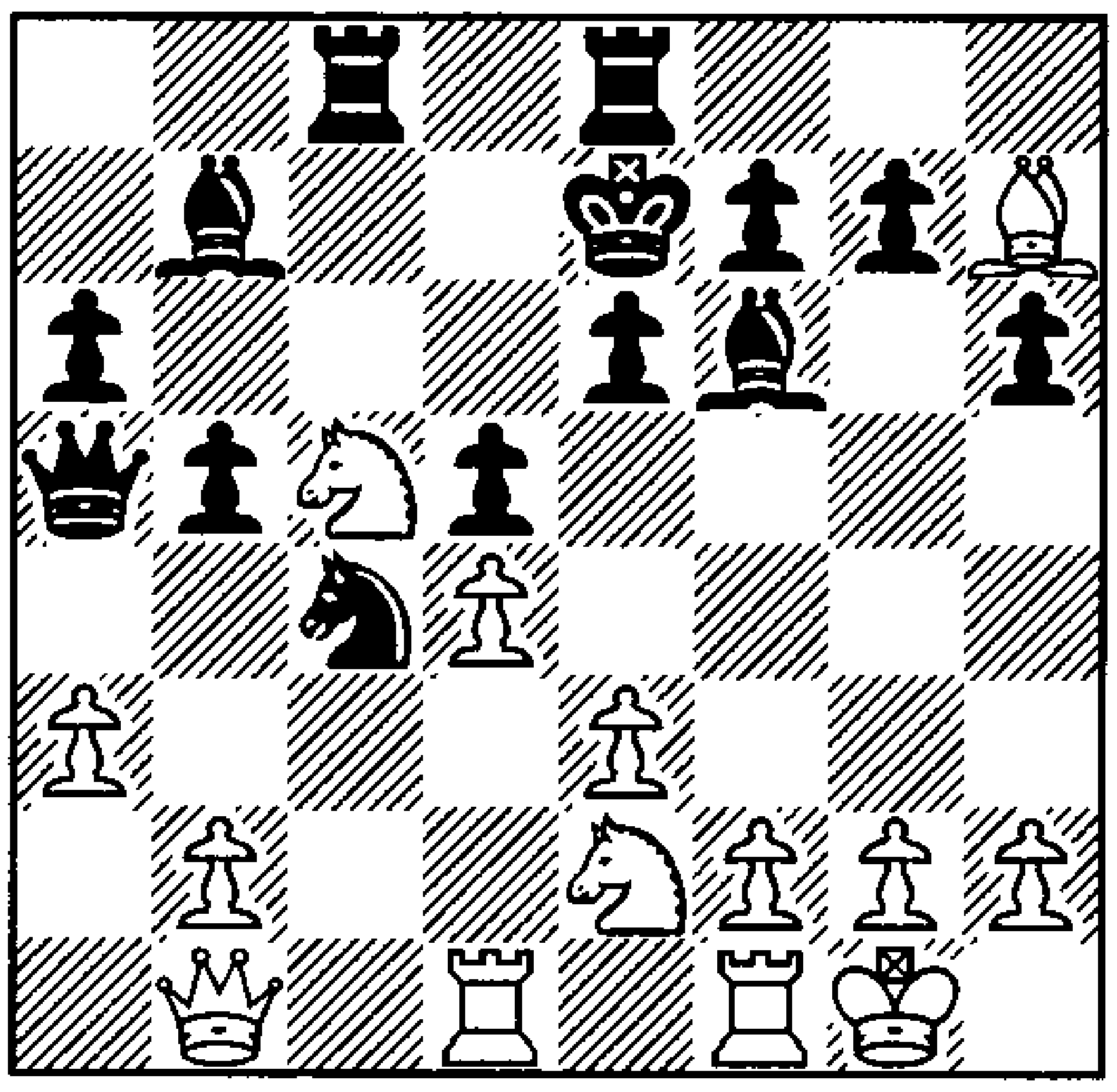
17...♘c4! (occupying the strong-point; at the same time ...♘d2 is threatened) **18 ♗xf6?!** (18 ♘f3 is more solid) **18...♗xf6**



Of course, not 18...gxf6? in view of 19 ♘xf7!? ♔xf7 20 ♗xc4, then ♕h7+ and ♘f4 (Alekhine), or 19 ♗h7+ ♔g7 20 ♘xf7! f5 21 ♘f4 ♔xh7 22 ♘xe6 ♔g6 23 ♘f4+ ♔xf7 24 ♕xf5+.

19 ♗h7+ (19 ♘f3!?) **19...♔f8 20 ♘d7+ ♔e7** (an unusual position, fighting play!) **21 ♘c5**

But not 21 ♘xf6? gxf6! with a double threat: ...♘d2 and ...f6-f5.



21...♕b6?

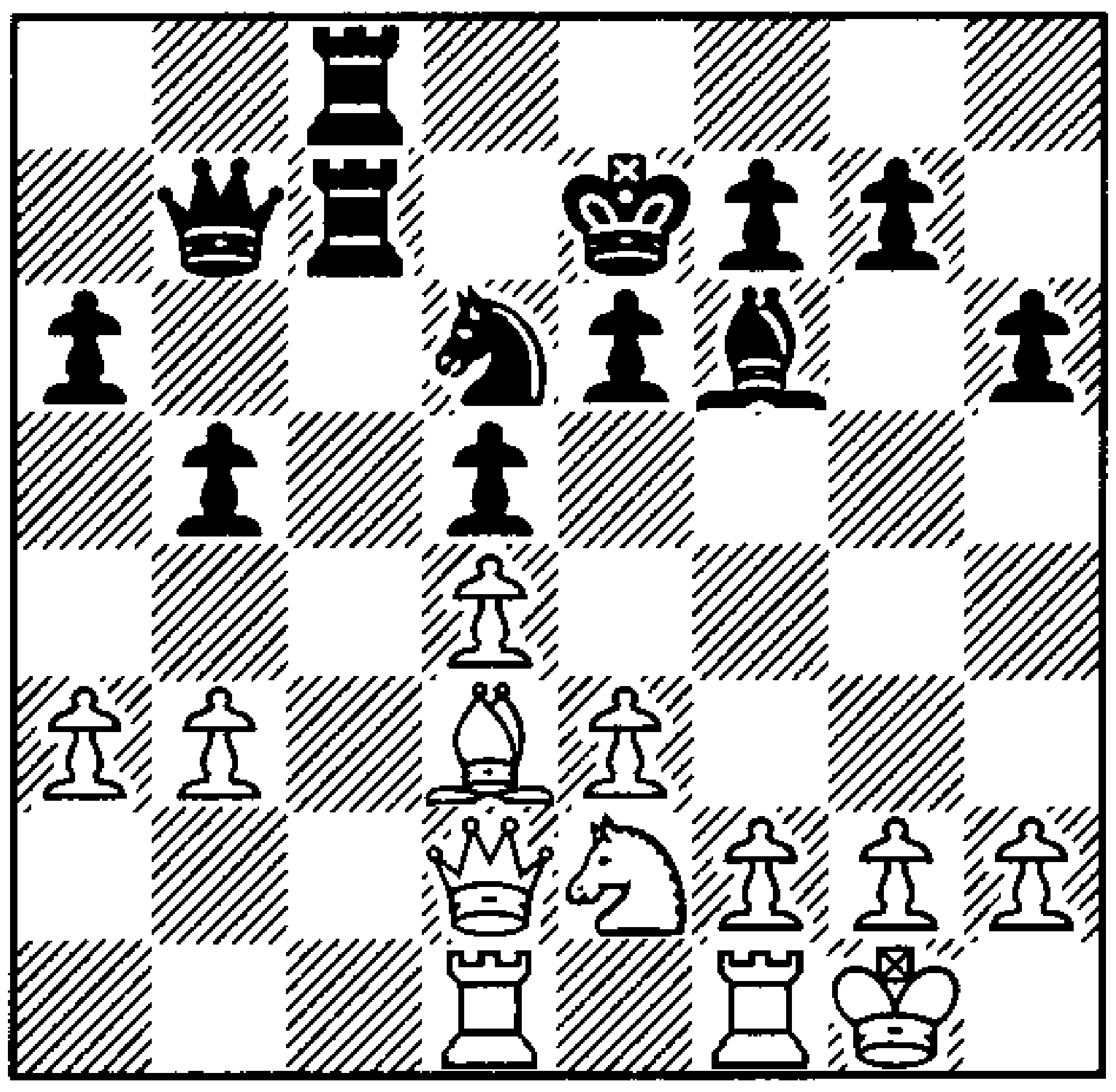
Here it is, the after-shock of the 11th game: the simple 21...♖xc5! would have given Black an almost decisive advantage, for example: 22 b4 (22 dxc5 ♘xb2 23 ♖c1 ♘c4 etc.) 22...♘xa3 23 ♕b3 (23 bxa5 ♘xb1 24 dxc5 ♘a3 25 ♗d3 ♖c8 or 23 ♕b2 ♕c7! 24 bxc5 ♕xc5 with powerful compensation for the exchange) 23...♕a4! 24 ♕xa4 bxa4 25 bxc5 g6 26 ♖a1 ♘c4 27 ♖xa4 a5 28 ♘c3 ♗c6 29 ♖a2 ♔f8 30 ♘a4 e5 and wins.

'After the text move Black does still retain some positional advantage, but he can no longer seriously expect to win the game.' (Alekhine)

22 ♘xb7 (inaccurate is 22 ♗d3?! ♘xb2 23 ♘xb7 ♘xd3) **22...♕xb7 23 ♗d3 ♖c7?**

'With this Black loses the remainder of his advantage, for now he can no longer prevent his knight from being driven from its post. He had two ways of preventing b2-b3: by 23...♔f8 and ...♗e7, or 23...♕b6 ...♕a5. In either case he would have maintained his knight outpost by the timely attack on the a3-pawn. This omission is particularly curious, because Capablanca surely must have been aware that his one advantage consisted precisely in the superior position of his knight.' (Alekhine)

24 ♕a2 ♖ec8 25 b3 ♘d6 26 ♕d2



White already has a slight plus: he 'is already giving his opponent something to think about, by threatening to infiltrate at a5 or b4 with his queen.' (Alekhine) And in this slightly inferior position with its restless king, Capa slowly loses, from time to time making second-rate moves 'on general grounds'.

26...♕b6 27 ♖c1 ♔d7 28 ♖xc7+ ♖xc7 29 ♗b1!

Black would have liked to exchange all the rooks (after 29 ♖c1 the game is level), but White is by no means obliged to fall in with his wishes. He is intending the manoeuvre ♘f4-d3-c5.

29...♗e7 30 ♘f4 ♔c8 31 ♕e2!

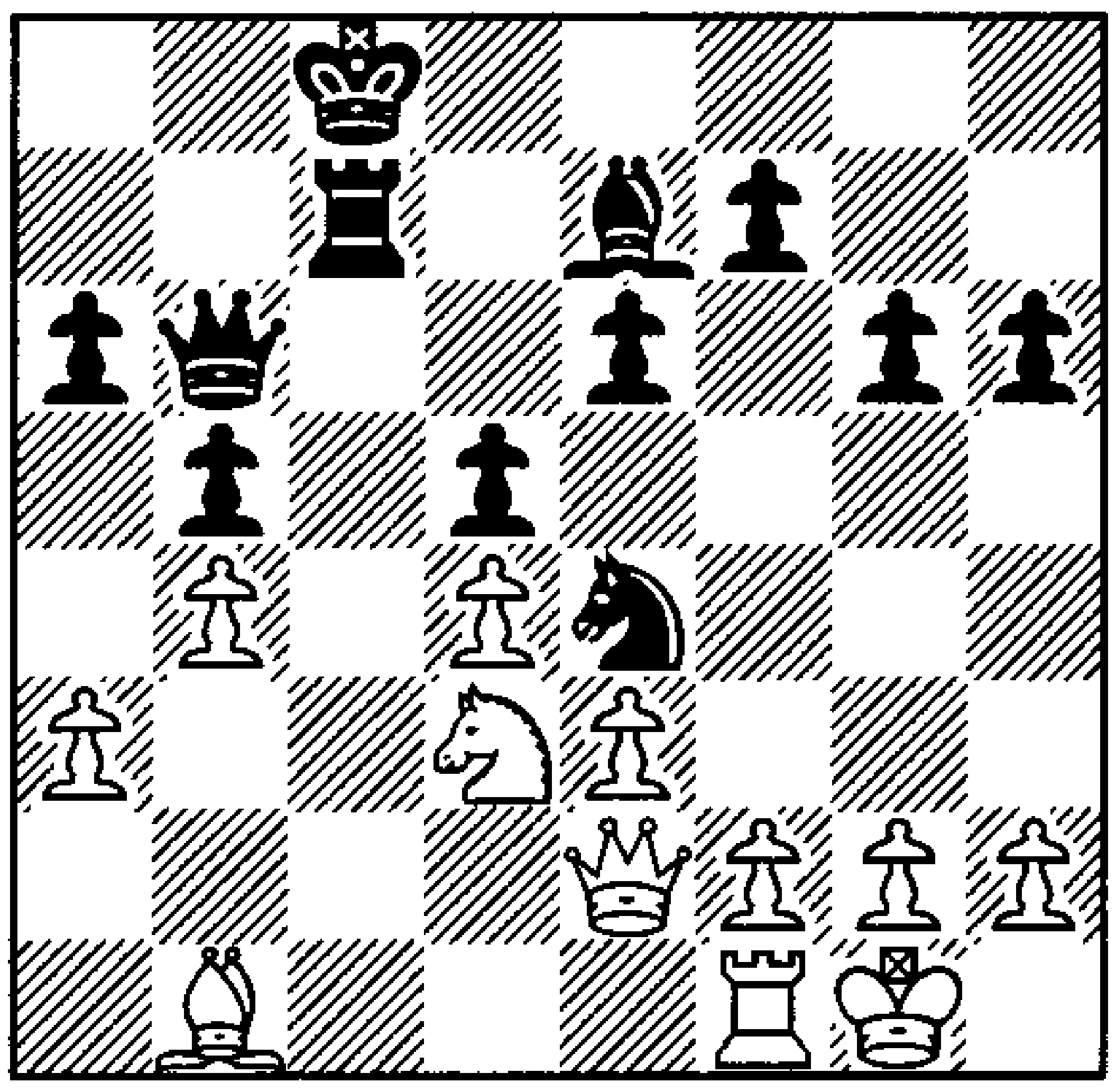
White is not satisfied with 31 ♘d3 ♘e4 32 ♕b2 ♕c6 33 ♖c1 ♕d6 34 ♖xc7+ with the exchange of rooks and a rapid draw. Had the black king been at g8, rather than c8, this is how it would all have ended: White would not have even a hint of the attack that brings him victory in the game.

31...g6

If 31...♖c3 Alekhine had in mind 32 ♕g4! ♔d8 (32...♖xb3? 33 ♘xd5) 33 ♕xg7, and also if 31...♕a5!? – 32 ♕g4! with 'some very sharp lines in which White would have kept the upper hand, e.g. 32...♔b7 (*32...♗f8!? – G. K.*) 33 ♕xg7 ♕xa3 34 ♕xh6 ♖c1 35 ♗d3 ♖xf1+ (*35...♖c7!? – G. K.*) 36 ♗xf1 ♕xb3 37 h4 a5 (*? – G. K.*) 38 ♘xe6! fxe6 39 ♕xe6 ♘c8 40 h5.' (Alekhine) I agree: 40...♔c7 41 h6 ♕b1 42 ♕f7 wins. But after 37...♕c2! 38 ♘d3 (38 ♘xe6? ♘e4!) 38...a5 39 ♘c5+ ♔a7 the evaluation of the position is by no means clear-cut.

32 ♘d3 ♘e4?! 33 b4

Alekhine's consistent and energetic play makes this game very interesting. White has subtly increased his advantage, by preparing to occupy c5. And at this pre-time-trouble moment, Black makes two suicidal errors, one after another.



33...♖c3?

Pseudo-activity! However, Black's position was already difficult: to Capablanca's recommendation of 33...♘d6 34 ♘c5 ♘c4 Alekhine responded with the sharp 35 e4! ♗xc5 (35...♘xa3 36 exd5 exd5 37 ♕f3 or 35...dxe4 36 a4!) 36 dxc5 ♕c6 37 exd5 exd5 38 a4! bxa4 39 ♗a2 ♕b5 40 ♖d1 ♖d7 41 h4 'and White has very good attacking chances'.

34 ♕b2! (34 ♘c5 ♘xc5 35 dxc5 ♕c7 36 ♕f3 f5 is pointless) **34...♕c7?**

'Only this is the real error, which quickly leads to defeat. Black could still have retreated the rook to c7, admittedly with a markedly worse game, e.g. 34...♖c7 35 ♘c5 ♘d6 (both 35...♘xc5 and 35...♗xc5 would lose a pawn after 36 dxc5 and ♕h8+) 36 a4, and White has a strong attack.' (Alekhine)

35 ♘c5 (with the threat of ...♗xe4) **35...♗xc5** (or 35...♖c4 36 ♗d3 ♘xc5 37 dxc5 ♖g4 38 h3 winning) **36 dxc5 ♕e5 37 f4!**

'This move, which deprives the black queen of the possibility of occupying a protected square on the e5-h8 diagonal, had been overlooked by Capablanca. The pin on the rook at c3, which Black was just about to resolve to his own advantage by ...♘f6, threatening ...♖xe3, now becomes fatal to him.' (Alekhine)

37...♕g7 (no better was 37...♕f6 38 ♗xe4 dxe4 39 ♖f2) **38 ♗xe4 dxe4 39 ♔f2?!**

Time-trouble! Simpler was 39 ♖f2 g5 40 ♖c2 and wins.

39...♕f6 40 g3 g5 41 ♖c1 1-0

After 41...gxf4 42 ♖xc3 fxg3+ 43 ♔g1! the king avoids perpetual check: 43...gxh2+ 44 ♔xh2 ♕h4+ 45 ♔g2 ♕g4+ 46 ♔f1! ♕f3+ 47 ♔e1 ♕h1+ 48 ♔d2 etc.

The score became 3-2 in favour of the challenger. In Buenos Aires something unbelievable was happening! At the time the story went round the city, that a dumb person, a fervent Capablanca supporter, on hearing about the result of the 12th game, exclaimed: 'It's not possible!' – and in his grief he again lost the power of speech...

It was indeed an unprecedented occurrence: Capablanca had lost two games in a row! In a complicated, rather irrational struggle Alekhine had proved stronger. This had to be digested, and the rather shaken champion began making draws. The challenger also did not object to a temporary calm: sooner or later the opponent would have to open up...

Of special note in this drawing series are the 17th game, where Alekhine masterfully saved a difficult endgame, and the exciting 20th – the herald of further shocks.

Game 127
A.Alekhine-J.R.Capablanca
World Championship Match,
Buenos Aires 1927, 20th game
Queen's Gambit D67

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 e3 0-0 6 ♘f3 ♘bd7 7 ♖c1 c6 (7...a6) **8 ♗d3** (avoiding the struggle for a tempo by 8 ♕c2) **8...dxc4**

Learning from bitter experience, the champion aims for simplification, choosing the relieving 'Capablanca Variation'. From the practical viewpoint this was the correct decision: all eight of the match duels on this theme ended in draws, although White held some initiative.

9 ♗xc4 ♘d5 10 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 11 ♘e4 ♘5f6

More accurate than 11...♕b4+ 12 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 13 ♔xd2 ♖d8 14 ♖hd1 ♘5f6 in view of 15 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 16 ♗b3! with a slight advantage for White (sixth game).

12 ♘g3 ♕b4+ 13 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 14 ♔xd2 ♖d8

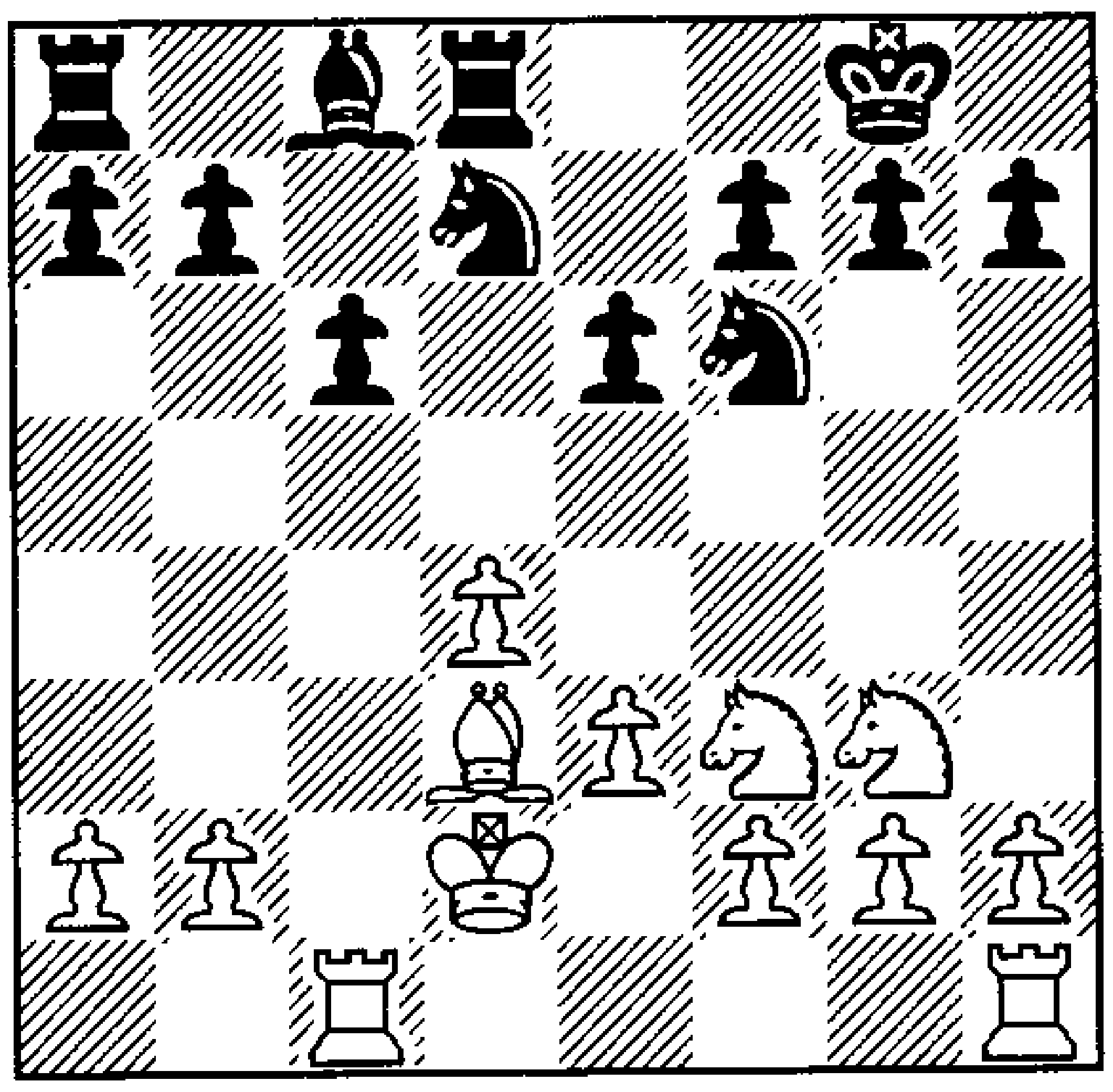
A further refinement: the 16th game went 14...b6 15 e4 ♖d8 16 e5 ♘e8 17 ♔e3 ♗b7 18 ♖hd1 c5?! (18...♔f8!) 19 d5 (in the press it was written that 'Alekhine took so long thinking over this move, that Capablanca had time to take a nap'; 19 ♘e4!? is also interesting) 19...exd5 20 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 21 ♖xd5 ♘c7 22 ♖d2 ♘f8 23 ♖cd1 ♖xd2 24 ♖xd2 ½-½. White has clearly the better endgame, and Alekhine had to justify such an early agreement to a draw:

'We were playing in the Jockey Club, not the usual venue, and it was so noisy that we were forced to adjourn at move 24, i.e. even before the time control, in order to allow time for things to calm down. Later on, however, I was no longer in the mood for deep thought, and the game was agreed drawn without further ado. Incidentally, the above lines may serve to show that the report that my opponent "fell asleep" during this game was nothing more than the invention of some witty newspaper man.'

As it later transpired, Black equalises more simply by 14...c5! 15 ♗b5 (15 ♔e2 cxd4 16 ♘xd4 ♘e5; 15 dxc5 ♘xc5 16 ♔e2 ♗d7 17 ♘e5 ♖fd8) 15...cxd4 16 ♘xd4 ♘b6 17 f4 ♖d8 (Alekhine-Stahlberg, Buenos Aires Olympiad 1939).

15 ♗d3

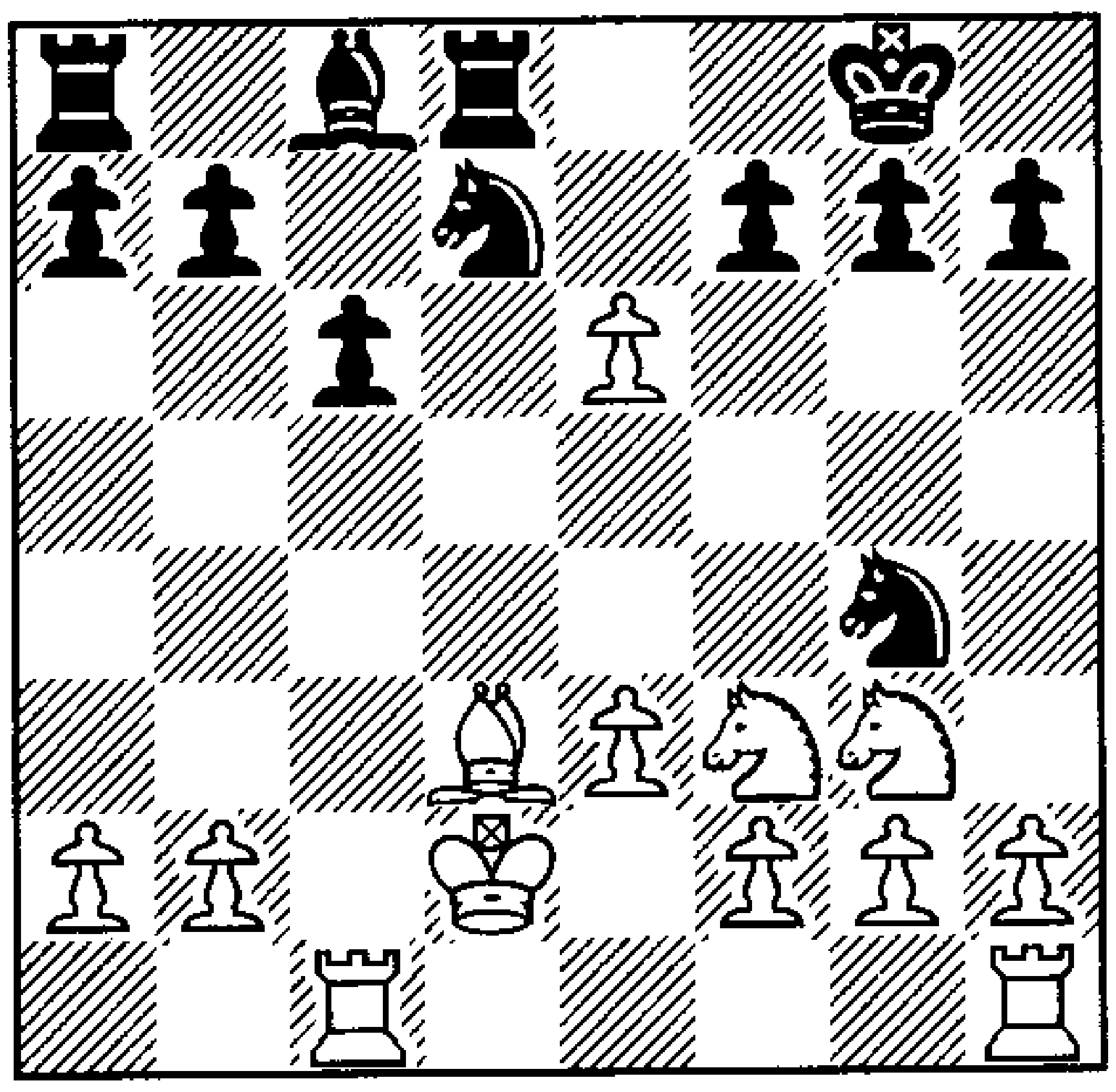
Preventing the development of the black bishop by ...b7-b6 and ...♗b7. The 18th game went 15 ♔e2 b6 16 ♖hd1 ♗b7 17 ♖d2 (or 17 ♖c2 c5) 17...♔f8 18 ♖cd1 ♔e7 19 e4 h6! 20 h3 g6 21 ♖d3 c5 with a level game. And in the 22nd, 24th, 28th and 30th games the discussion revolved around 15 ♖hd1! b6 16 e4 ♗b7 17 e5 ♘e8 18 ♔e3 ♔f8! etc.



After some thought, Capablanca realised that he had only one way to free himself:

15...e5! (otherwise Black will simply suffocate) **16 dxe5** (but not 16 ♘xe5? ♘xe5 17 dxe5 ♘g4 and Black is on top) **16...♘g4 17 e6!**

Adding fuel to the fire. 'If White is happy to settle for immediate equality, he can continue 17 ♔e2 ♘dxe5 18 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 19 ♗f5!' (Alekhine)

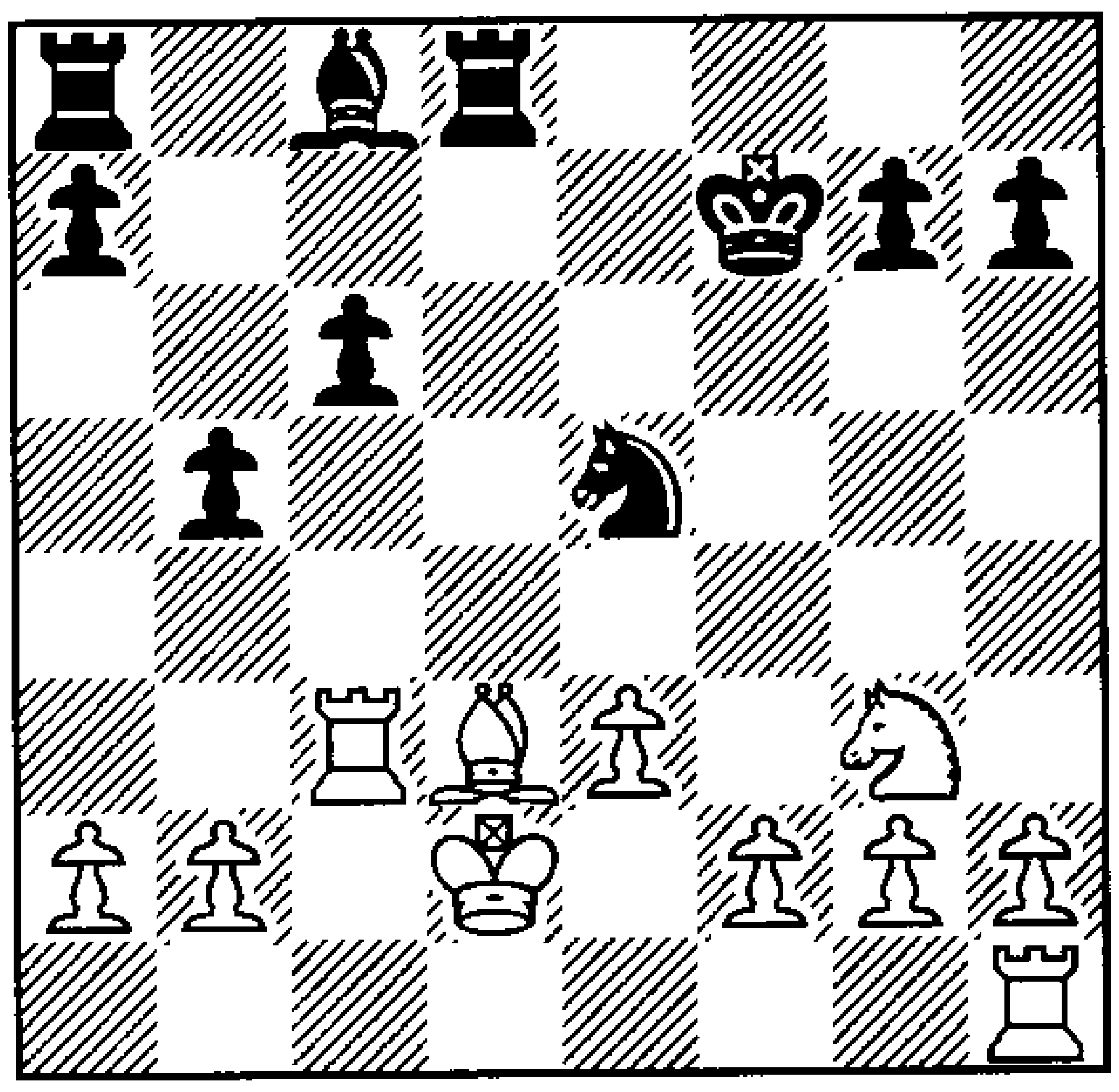


17...♘de5!

Interesting complications! '17...fxe6 would be answered not by 18 ♔e2, since then Black would obtain a very comfortable game by 18...♘de5 19 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 20 ♖hd1 b6, but by 18 ♔e1!, since in that case 18...♘de5 fails as follows: 19 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 20 ♗e4 b6 21 f4 ♘d3+ 22 ♗xd3 ♖xd3 23 ♖xc6 ♗b7 (not 23...♖xe3+ because of 24 ♔d2 and White wins; *but 23...e5! 24 f5 ♗a6 25 ♖c7 ♖xe3+ 26 ♔f2 ♖d3 27 ♖e1 etc. is more tenacious – G. K.*) 24 ♖c7 ♗xg2 25 ♖g1 with a winning position for White. Thus, since after 18 ♔e1! Black would have to avoid the sharp lines, he would remain at something of a disadvantage because of his weakened pawn formation.' (Alekhine)

18 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 19 exf7+ ♔xf7 20 ♖c3 b5!

An excellent tactical resource! 'Because of the strong threat of 21...b5-b4 followed by 22...♗a6, White is forced to challenge the hostile knight immediately.' (Alekhine)



21 f4!

All 'normal' moves lose – 21 b4? a5! or 21 ♘e4? b4 22 ♖b3 ♗a6 23 ♘c5 ♘xd3 24 ♘xd3 c5, and so Alekhine sacrifices the exchange! I think that the subsequent turn of events must have been another psychological blow to Capablanca. Again he was inferior to his opponent in evaluating the dynamic resources of the position: he was hoping that the rook would outweigh the minor piece, and he almost lost... In fact, White has equal chances at the very least.

21...b4 22 fxe5!

'22 ♖b3 would favour Black because of 22...♘c4+ 23 ♔c2 (23 ♔e2 ♗g4+ and ...♘a5) 23...♘xe3+ 24 ♔c1 ♗e6 25 ♗g6+ hxg6 26 ♖xe3 ♗xa2 27 b3 a5.' (Alekhine)

22...bxc3+ 23 ♔xc3 (with the threat of ♘e4-d6) **23...♔e6**

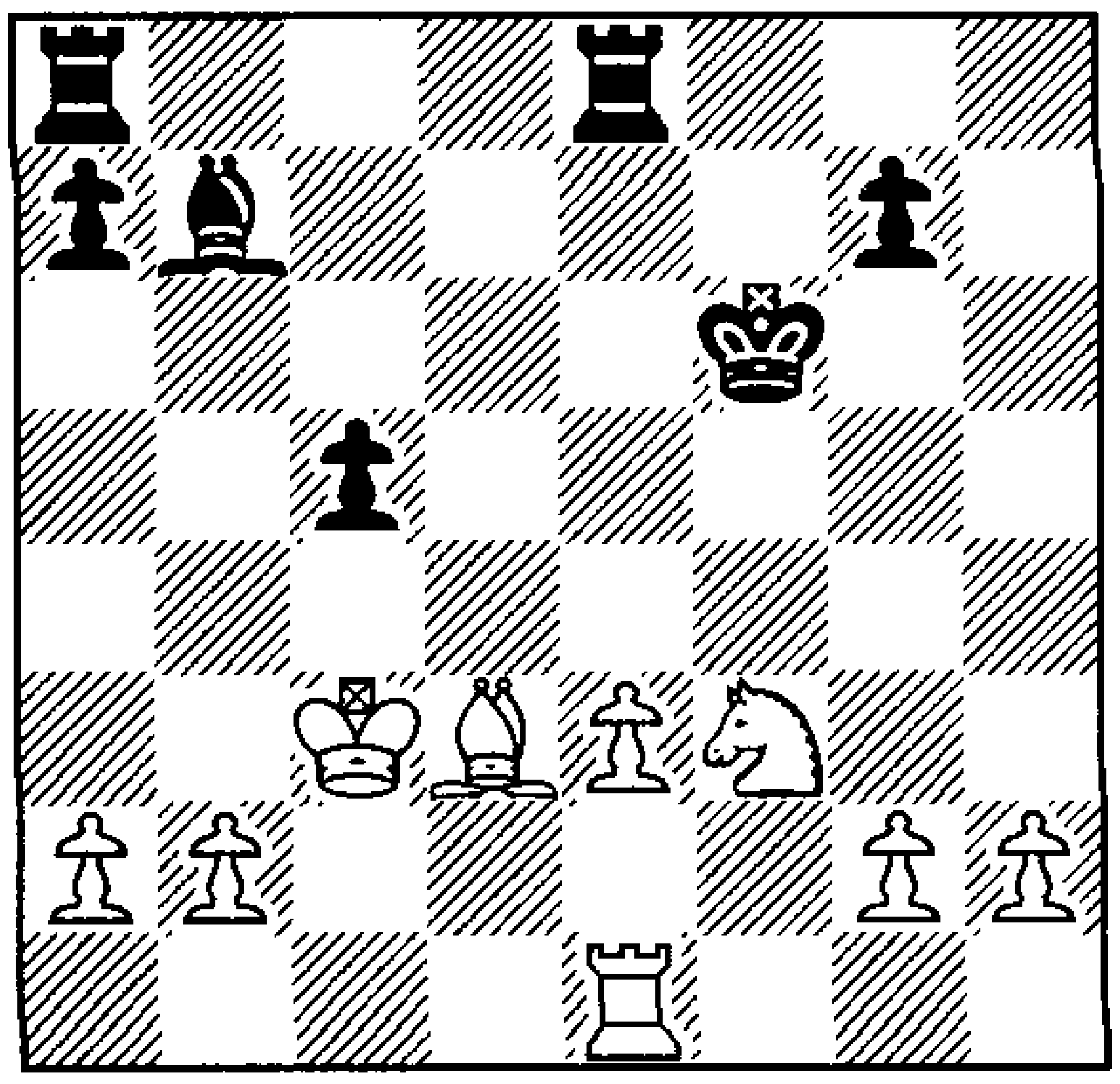
'23...♖e8 would be weaker because of 24 ♗c4+ ♔g6 (24...♗e6 25 ♘e4!) 25 ♔d4 c5+ 26 ♔xc5 ♖xe5+ 27 ♔d4 followed by e3-e4 and the possibility of ♗d5, with a good game for White.' (Alekhine)

24 ♘e2! (but not 24 ♗xh7 ♔xe5 and ...♗e6 with equal chances) **24...♔xe5 25 ♘d4!?**

Playing for domination! 'If 25 ♗xh7 at once, Black would not play 25...♗f5 because of 26 ♗xf5 ♔xf5 27 ♖f1+! with a good game for White, since 27...♔e4 would be refuted by 28 ♘g3+! ♔xe3? 29 ♖f3 mate, but 25...♗a6!, which would secure him the initiative.' (Alekhine) True, after 26 ♘f4 ♖d6 27 h4 White is not in danger of losing, but... neither is Black!

25...♗b7 26 ♗xh7 c5 27 ♘f3+ ♔f6 28 ♗d3 (inferior is 28 ♖f1?! ♗a6 29 ♖f2 g6) **28...♖e8 29 ♖e1**

Here too 29 ♖f1? is weak because of 29...♖xe3 30 ♘d4+ ♔e5! 31 ♖f5+ ♔d6.



29...♗xf3?!

Objectively simpler was 29...♗e4! (but not 29...♖e7?! 30 e4) 30 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 31 ♘d2 ♖g4 32 ♖e2 followed by e3-e4 and a probable draw. But Capa had not yet resigned himself to the fact that the position was approximately equal. I think that this position with unbalanced material was not to his liking: it turns out that it is not Black, but White who has a small plus!

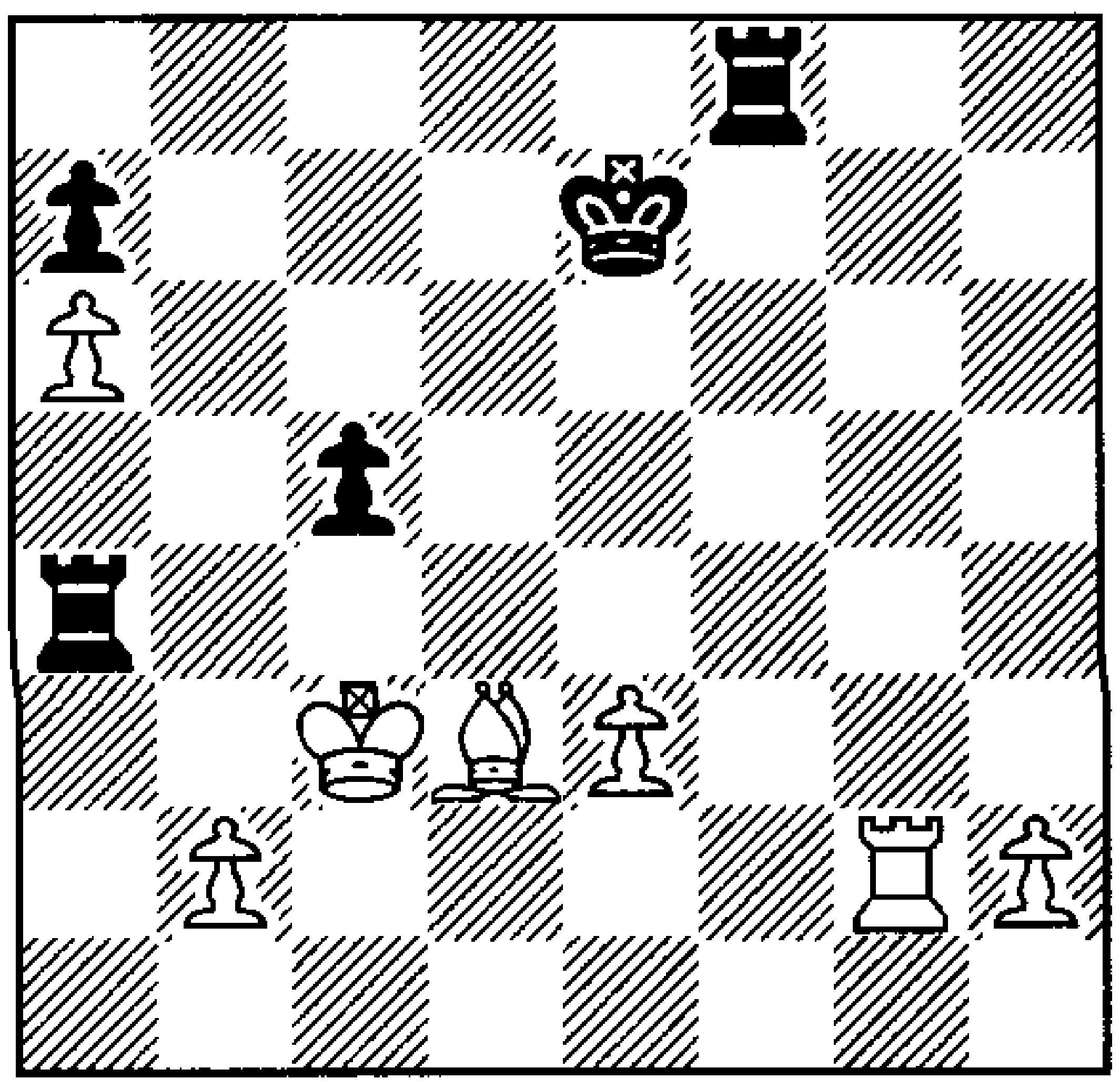
30 gxf3 ♖h8 31 ♖e2 ♖h4 32 ♗e4 ♖d8!

According to Alekhine, 32...♖ah8?! is inaccurate in view of 33 ♖d2 (threatening ♖d6+ and ♖a6) 34...♔e7 34 ♖g2 ♔f7 35 ♖g5! ♖c8 36 h3 ♖c7 37 ♖g3, then b2-b3, a2-a4, ♔c4 and possibly f3-f4 and ♗g2 with the initiative.

33 a4

'White could also safely make an attempt to win with 33 ♔c4, but after 33...♖dh8 34 ♖d2 ♖xh2 35 ♖d6+ ♔e7 36 ♖a6 ♖xb2 37 ♖xa7+ ♔d6 a draw would once again be the likely outcome.' (Alekhine)

33...g5 34 a5 (34 b3!? Alekhine) **34...g4! 35 fxg4** (35 f4 ♖h3 36 ♗c6 ♖dh8 37 ♗d7 is unclear) **35...♖xg4 36 ♗d3 ♖a4 37 ♖f2+ ♔e7 38 a6 ♖f8** (more rigorous is 38...♖a1 39 ♖g2 c4! 40 ♗xc4 ♖c8 41 ♔b4 ♖b8+! or 41 b3 ♖xa6 with a draw) **39 ♖g2**



39...c4?

A nervy, impulsive thrust – typical of a time scramble. Of course, 39...♖f7 was correct.

40 ♗xc4?

Amnesty! With his last move before the time control the challenger misses an excellent winning chance – 40 ♖g7+!, for example: 40...♖f7 41 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 42 ♗xc4+ and with accurate play White should win, or 40...♔f6 41 ♖g6+ ♔f7 42 ♖g4!, picking up the c4-pawn.

40...♖c8 41 b3 ♖xa6 42 e4 ♖a1! 43 ♔d4

Or 43 e5 ♖c1+ 44 ♔b4 (44 ♔d4 ♖d1+; 44 ♔b2 ♖1xc4 45 bxc4 ♖xc4 46 ♔b3 ♖h4) 44...a5+ 45 ♔xa5 ♖1xc4! drawing

43...♖h8 ½-½

'It is impossible for White to concentrate his forces to any decisive effect.' (Alekhine)

The draws in the 17th and 20th games had a dispiriting effect on Capablanca: he did not see how he could defeat Alekhine. In 1921 the same thing happened with Lasker, who did not know how to beat Capablanca. But Lasker, after all, was 52 years old and playing in a foreign land, whereas the 39-year-old Capa was at the height of his powers and was practically playing at home, in his native continent. Gradually be began to overcome the crisis, and therefore the match turned out to be far more interesting.

However, before this came the 21st game, which came as a shock to both the champion, and the entire chess world: no one had yet defeated Capablanca in *such* a way!

Game 128

J.R.Capablanca-A.Alekhine

World Championship Match,
Buenos Aires 1927, 21st game
Queen's Gambit D63

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♘bd7 5 e3 ♗e7 6 ♘f3 0-0 7 ♖c1 a6!?

It is curious that in the match Alekhine only played this (eight times), while Capa played only 7...c6 (13 times), and both mini-matches, both with White and with Black, were won by the challenger with a score of '+1', all the other games being drawn.

8 a3?!

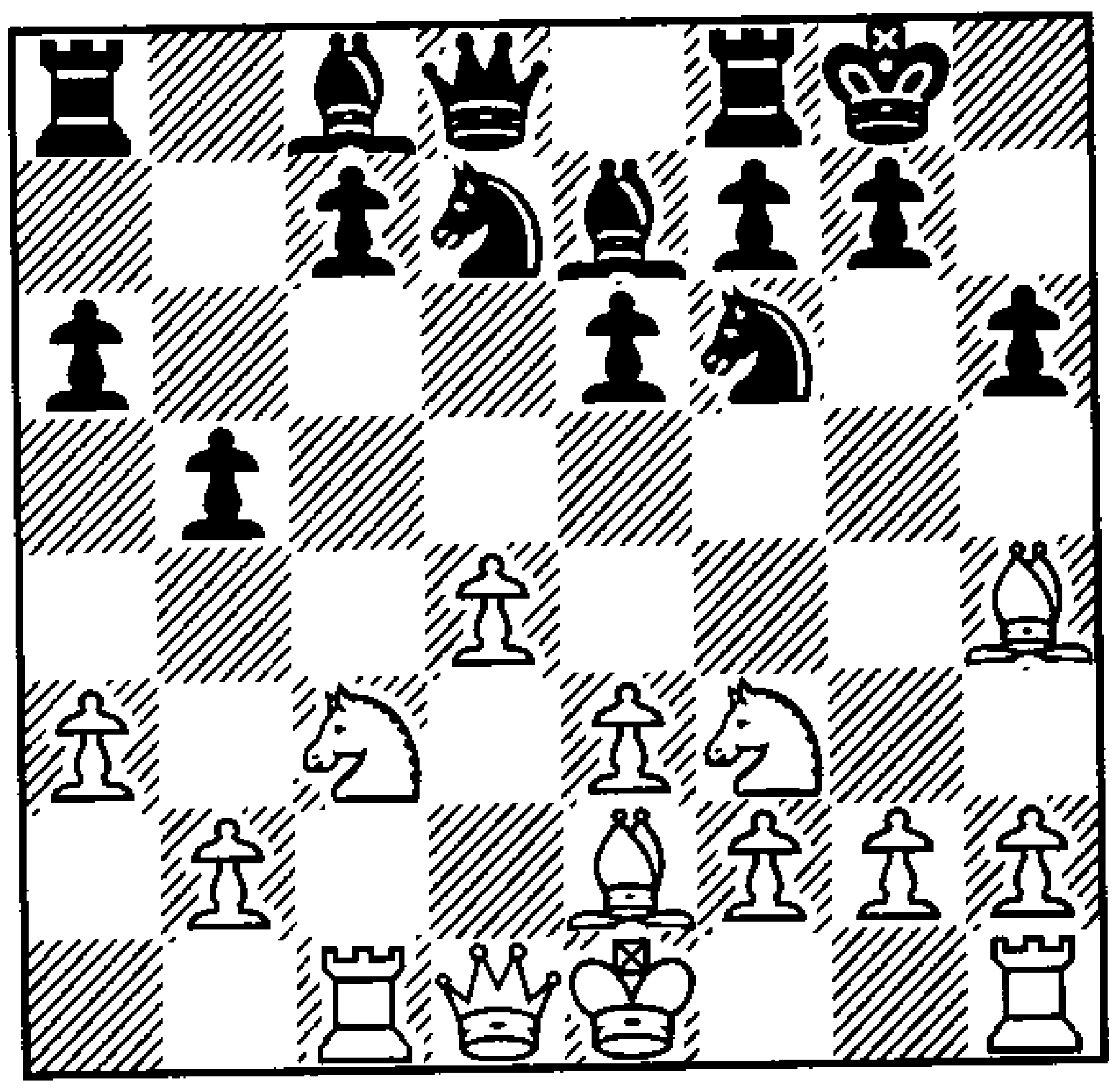
'This tame rejoinder will be convincingly refuted (as a winning attempt, of course) in the present game,' writes Alekhine, recommending 8 cxd5, as in the later odd-numbered games (*Game No.105*).

The plan with 8 c5!? was not highly rated at that time in view of 8...c6 9 b4 a5 10 a3 axb4 11 axb4 b6 12 ♗f4 (12 ♗d3 bxc5 13 bxc5 e5!) 12...bxc5 13 bxc5 ♖a3! equalising (Alekhine-Henneberger, Basel simultaneous 1925). However, current theory gives preference to 9 ♗d3 b6 10 cxb6! with a slight advantage (Portisch-Petrosian, Palma de Mallorca 10th matchgame 1974).

8...h6! 9 ♗h4 dxc4! 10 ♗xc4 b5!

'More natural and better than 10...c5 which, however, in the 13th, 15th, 17th and 19th games proved sufficient for maintaining the balance of the position.' (Alekhine) An improvement at the fifth attempt! Such was the level of theoretical duels at that time...

11 ♗e2 (or 11 ♗a2 ♗b7 12 0-0 c5 equalising)



11...♗b7?

No one has mentioned that 11...c5! was more accurate. Apparently Alekhine was sure that all the same Capa would not do anything before castling.

12 0-0?

'In the event of 12 b4 Black would have obtained the initiative by 12...a5! 13 ♕b3 axb4 14 axb4 g5 15 ♗g3 ♘d5 etc.' (Alekhine) Excuse me, but after 16 0-0 Black's position is bad. Of course, White should have played for a bind – 12 b4!

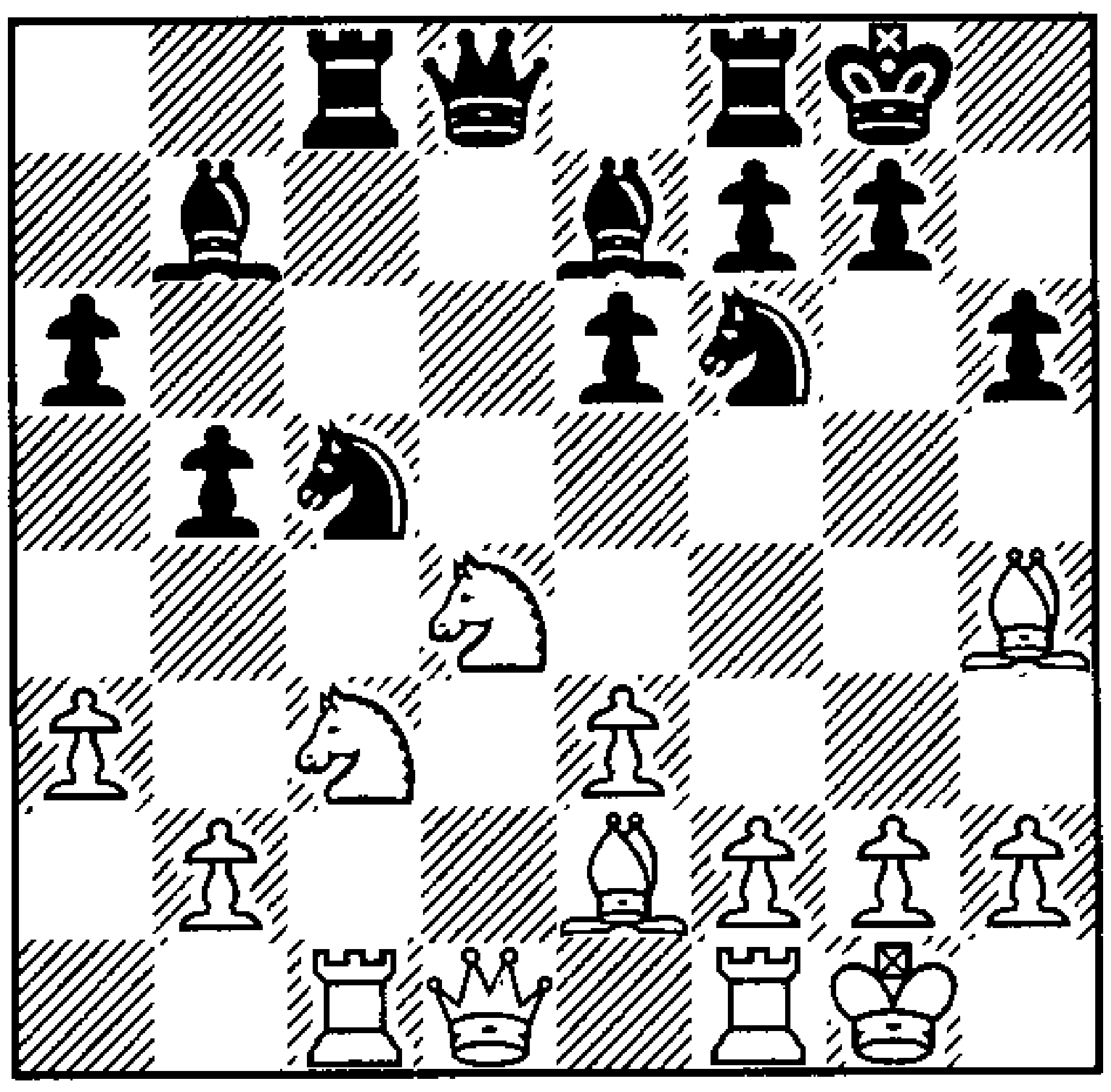
12...c5 13 dxc5 ♘xc5 14 ♘d4

This move does not yet spoil anything, but... 'As White has not an atom of advantage the logical course for him was to simplify matters by means of 14 ♕xd8 ♖fxd8 15 ♖fd1.' (Alekhine) With the approximate continuation 15...♘b3 16 ♖c2 ♖ac8 17 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 18 ♗d1 ♗c7 19 ♗g3 and a level game.

Alekhine considered 14 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15 ♘xb5 to be 'entirely wrong' because of 15...♕xd1 16 ♖fxd1 ♘b3 17 ♖c7 ♗xf3 18 ♗xf3 axb5 19 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 'with advantage to Black'. However, in my view, after 20 ♖b7 ♖a5 (20...♗xb2 21 ♖xb5 ♖xa3 22 ♖b1 is equal) 21 g3 ♔h7 22 ♖xf7 ♔g6 23 ♖b7 ♗xb2 24 ♖b1 ♘c5 25 ♖b6 ♘a4 26 ♖xe6+ ♔f7 27 ♖c6 ♗xa3 this advantage is only slight.

14...♖c8

Parrying once and for all the threat of ♘xb5.



15 b4?!

An unforced weakening of the c4-square. It would appear that Capa had not in fact decided whether he should play for a win or a draw, and vacillation in a complicated position normally has unfortunate results... According to Alekhine, 15 ♗f3 ♕b6 16 ♕e2 was simpler, with equal chances.

15...♘cd7!

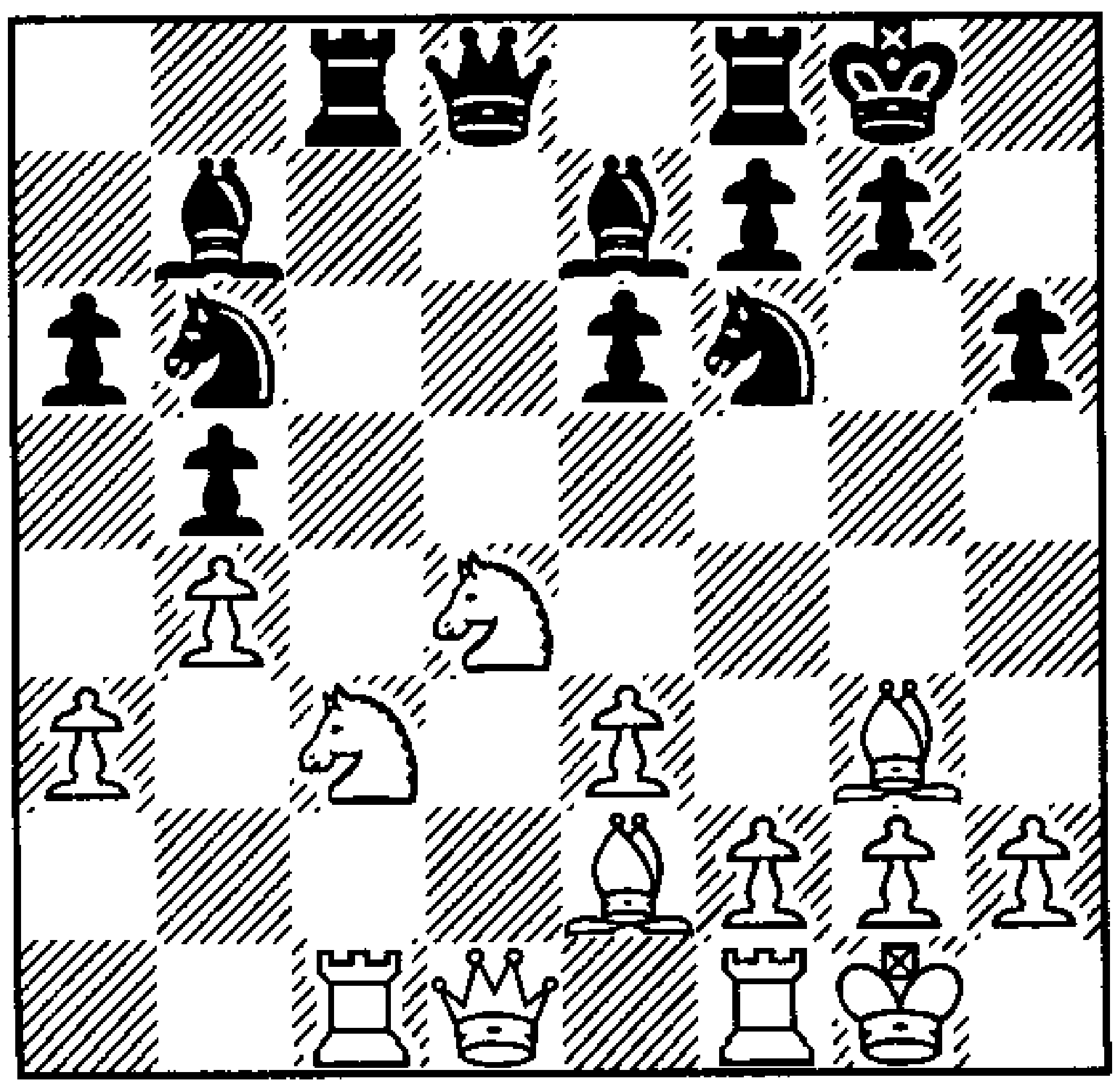
An unusual decision! Once again Capablanca 'did not guess': I think that he was expecting 15...♘ce4.

16 ♗g3

'In the event of 16 ♗f3 I intended to play 16...♕b6 17 ♘e4 ♖xc1 18 ♕xc1 ♖c8, after which the white queen would have had no good square at her disposal, for instance: 19 ♕b1? (or 19 ♕d2?) 19...♘xe4 etc., 19 ♕b2 g5 20 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6, 19 ♕d1(e1) g5 – also to Black's advantage.' (Alekhine) Advantage is not the word! After 17 ♘e4? (17 ♗g3 ♖fd8 18 ♕e2 really is better) the computer instantly finds an elementary win: 17...♖xc1 18 ♕xc1 ♗xe4! 19 ♗xe4 g5 20 ♘c6 (20 ♗g3 ♘xe4) 20...♗d6.

'By playing 16 ♘b3, to answer 16...♘b6 with 17 ♘a5 (*17...♗a8 18 ♗g3 etc. – G. K.*), Capablanca would have maintained every chance in the forthcoming struggle. But it was very hard for him to move his knight from its excellent central square somewhere sideways, to the edge of the board.' (Kotov) Yes, the knight at a5 is somewhat cut off, but on the other hand it holds the c4-square! However, it is not yet curtains...

16...♘b6



17 ♕b3?! (here too 17 ♘b3 had its point)

17...♘fd5!

A surprise! It would appear that Capa had considered only the crude 17...♘c4? 18 ♖fd1 ♕b6 19 a4! But Alekhine hinders a3-a4 and creates the positional threat of 18...♘xc3 19 ♖xc3 ♗d5 20 ♕b2 ♖xc3 21 ♕xc3 ♕a8 and ...♖c8!

18 ♗f3

'A rather makeshift defence.' (Alekhine) White also has definite problems after 18 ♘e4!? – the weakening of a number of squares is felt, especially c4, for example: 18...♘a4 19 ♖xc8 ♕xc8 20 ♘d6 ♗xd6 21

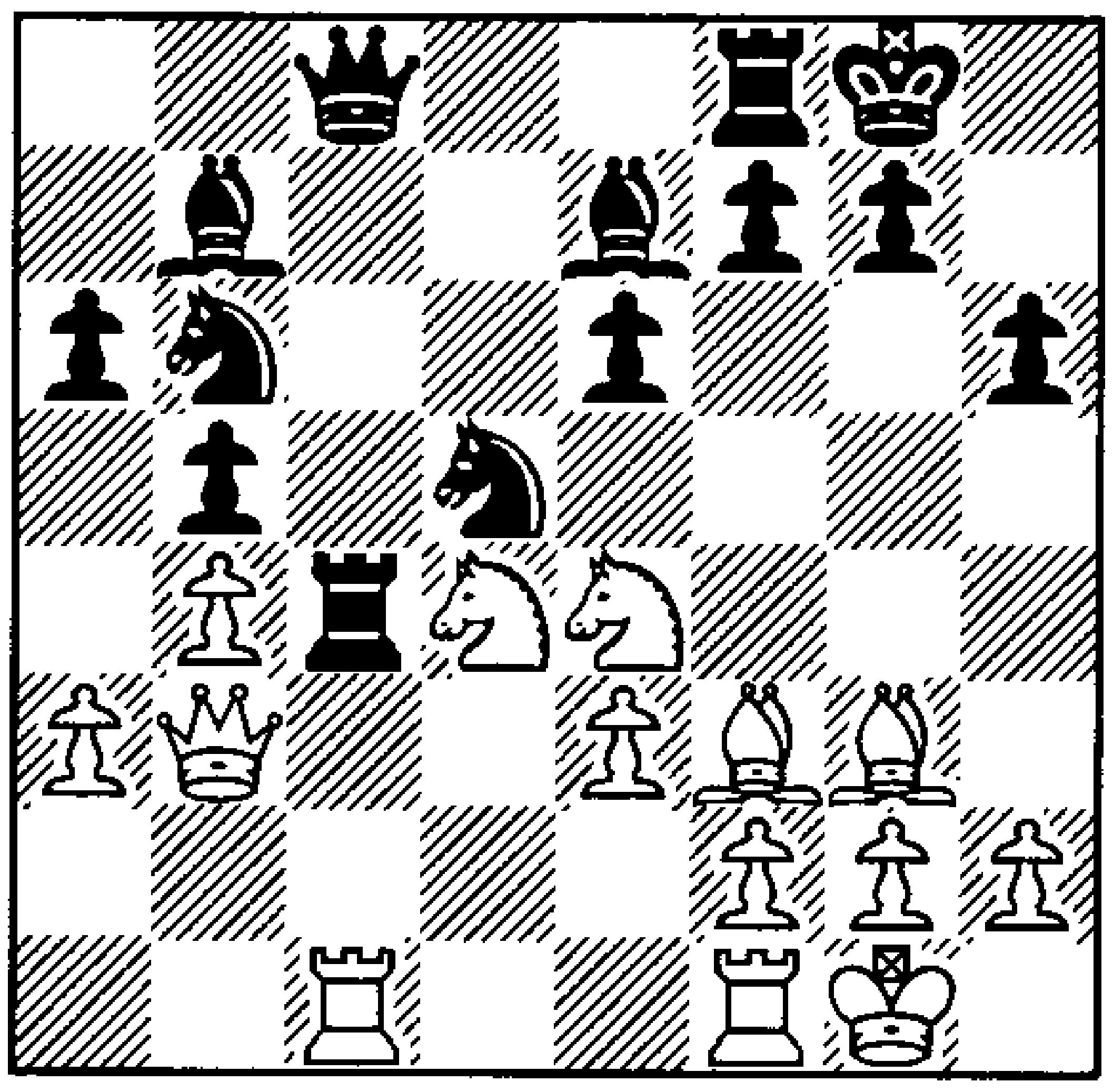
♗xd6 ♖e8 22 ♗e5 ♘dc3 23 ♗d3 f6 24 ♗g3 ♗e4 etc.

18...♖c4!

Consistent play and... again a surprise for Capablanca: a non-routine move – not the knight, but the rook! Generally speaking, I think that in this match Capa simply did not guess some of his opponent's moves...

19 ♘e4 (it is hard to decide on the return of the bishop – 19 ♗e2, especially since after 19...♖xc3 20 ♖xc3 ♘xc3 21 ♕xc3 ♕d7 22 ♖d1 ♖c8 23 ♕d3 ♗d5 White stands rather worse) **19...♕c8**

A critical moment.



20 ♖xc4?

'The decisive positional error. White's correct move was 20 ♕b1!, threatening both ♘d6 or ♗d6; if in that case 20...♖d8, then 21 ♘d2! ♖xc1 22 ♖xc1 ♕a8 23 ♗c7 and White would succeed in exchanging some further material without compromising his position.' (Alekhine) But I would add 23 ♘4b3 with equal chances. Therefore more promising is 20...♖xc1!? 21 ♖xc1 ♘c4 22 ♕a2 ♖d8 with some advantage to Black, whereas after the move in the game it becomes even greater.

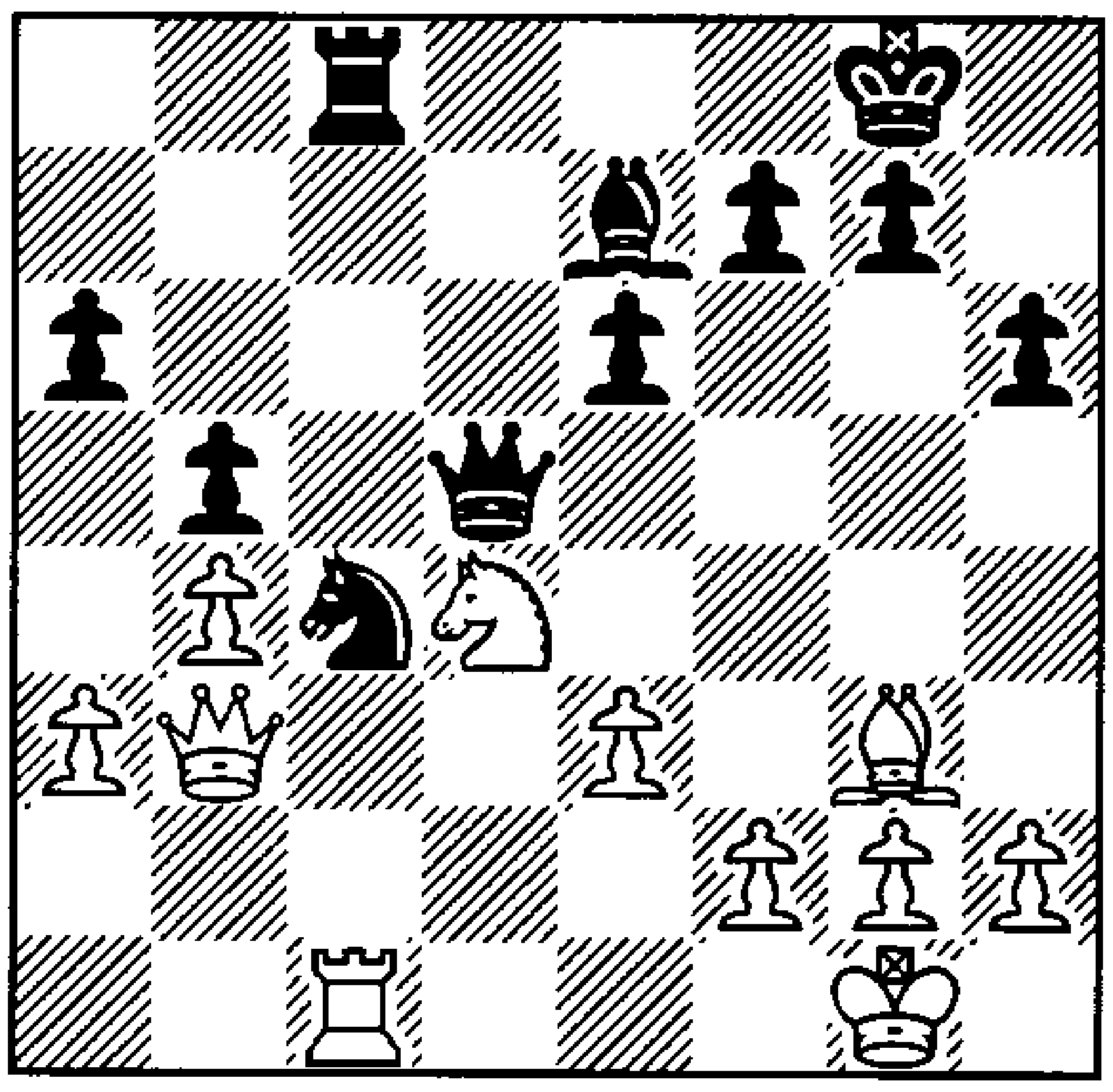
Here Alekhine is one hundred per cent right: 'Capablanca lost this game only because he did not realise in time the dangers of his position.'

20...♘xc4 21 ♖c1 ♕a8! (the threats of 22...♘dxe3 and 22...♘xb4 force White to retreat his knight from e4) **22 ♘c3**

If 22 ♘c5, then 22...♗xc5 23 bxc5 ♖c8 24 ♗e2 ♖xc5 25 ♗xc4 ♕c8 winning a pawn.

22...♖c8 (with the threat of ...♘d2) **23 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 24 ♗xd5 ♕xd5**

It is significant that White's position is already, apparently, strategically lost, although Capa would not appear to have made any serious mistakes. It's really quite something to achieve this by the 25th move in the Queen's Gambit!



25 a4?!

'The wish to reduce the pawn material on the queenside is natural, but White's position still remains compromised, inasmuch as his b-pawn will become a welcome object of attack in the endgame.' (Alekhine)

Extremely tired by the preceding struggle, Capa becomes nervous and does not offer the maximum resistance. Lasker suggested 25 f3 ♗f6 26 ♗f2, but after 26...♖d8 (26...♗xd4!?) 27 a4 (27 e4 ♕g5! 28 ♖d1 ♗xd4 29 ♗xd4 ♘d2 30 ♕c3 ♖xd4 wins) 27...♘xe3! 28 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 29 axb5 ♘f4 30 ♔f1 ♘d3 31 ♘c6 ♘xc1 32 ♘xd8 axb5 White is in trouble. Therefore 25 h3 was essential, and only after 25...♗f6 26 ♘f3 ♖d8 – 27 a4, although here too White's position is unenviable.

25...♗f6! 26 ♘f3

'Of course, not 26 ♖d1 bxa4 27 ♕xa4? ♘b2 28 ♕xa6 ♖a8 and wins.' (Alekhine) And White does not go in for 26 axb5 ♗xd4 27 exd4 axb5, realising that he will most probably be unable to hold his b4-pawn.

26...♗b2!

The beginning of the end: before playing the advance ...e6-e5-e4, Black activates his bishop.

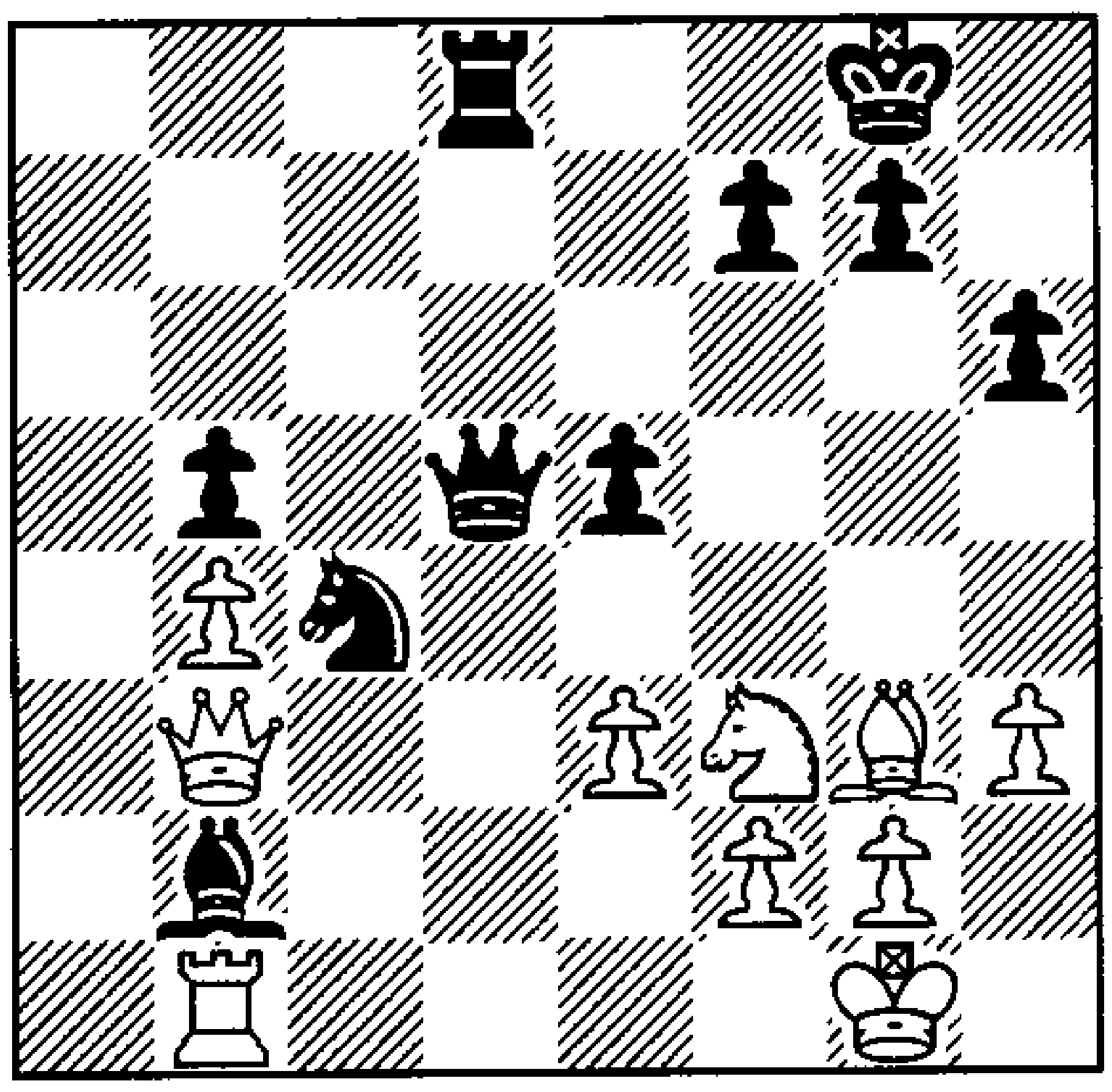
27 ♖e1

'The tactical justification of this bishop move is based upon the following variations: 27 ♖d1 bxa4! (more convincing than 27...♘xe3 28 ♖xd5 ♖c1+ 29 ♖d1 ♖xd1+ 30 ♕xd1 ♘xd1 31 axb5 axb5 32 ♗d6 when White could still put up some resistance) 28 ♕xa4 ♘b6! 29 ♖xd5 ♘xa4 30 ♖d1 ♘c3 31 ♖e1 ♖c4 32 ♗d6 ♘e4 33 ♗e7 f6 34 ♖b1 ♔f7 35 ♔f1 ♗c3 with an easily won ending, or 27 ♖b1 ♘a3! 28 ♕xb2 ♘xb1 29 ♕xb1 ♕b3! 30 ♕f1 bxa4 31 h3 a3, and the a-pawn marches forward to victory.' (Alekhine) White also fails to save the game by 30 ♕a1 (30 ♕e1? ♕a3! 31 ♕d2 ♕c1+) 30...♕xa4! 31 ♕e1 ♕a3 32 ♕d2 ♖c1+ 33 ♘e1 ♕b2! 34 ♕d8+ ♔h7 35 ♕d3+ f5 36 f3 ♕xb4.

Very impressive variations on favourite Alekhine themes: diversion, the weakness of the back rank, and so on.

27...♖d8 28 axb5 axb5 29 h3 (alas, too late) **29...e5! 30 ♖b1**

Finding himself practically in zugzwang, Capablanca allows an original tactical stroke by his opponent. It is hard to recommend the move 30 e4 in view of 30...♕d3 (and if necessary ...f7-f6) with the inevitable fall of the b4-pawn.



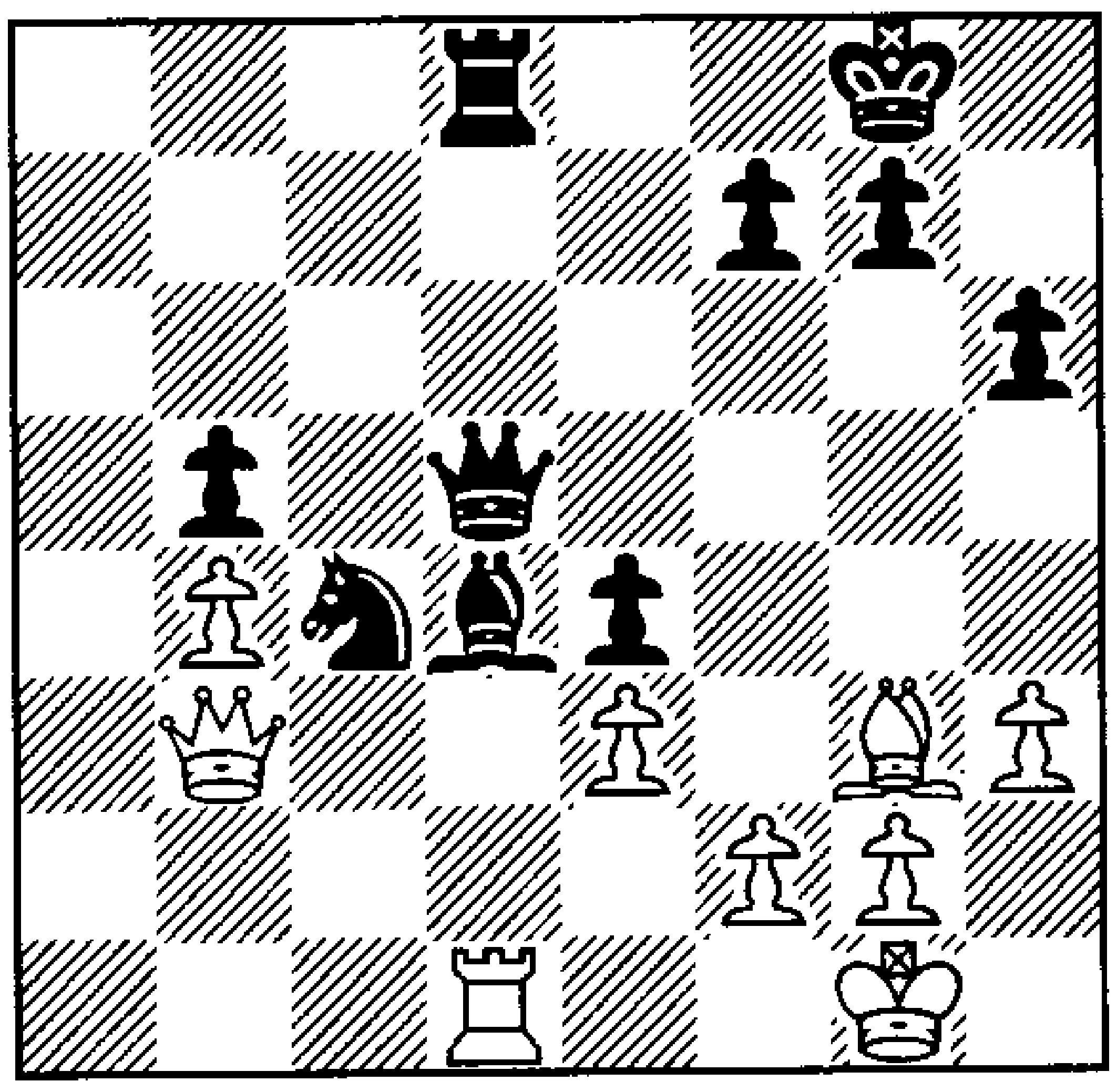
30...e4! 31 ♘d4?!

Time-trouble agony. I think that Capa sensed that White was already finished, and he was hoping for a miraculous save.

Indeed, it would not have helped to play either 31 ♘e1 ♕d2 32 ♕c2 (after 32 ♔f1 Alekhine gives 32...♖a8 33 ♖d1 ♖a3, but sharper is 32...♖d3! 33 ♘xd3 exd3 34 ♕d1 ♕c2 35 ♔g1 ♘d2 winning) 32...♕xc2 33 ♘xc2 ♖d2 34 ♘e1 ♘a3 and wins, or 31 ♘h2 ♕d3! 32 ♖xb2 (32 ♕a2 ♕d2) 32...♕xb3 33 ♖xb3 ♖d1+ 34 ♘f1 ♘d2 35 ♖a3 ♘xf1! 36 ♗e5 ♘xe3+ also with a won endgame.

31...♗xd4 32 ♖d1?

The final blunder. However, 32 exd4 ♕xd4 33 ♗f4 ♕d3 was also hopeless.



32...♘xe3! 0-1

33 ♕xd5 ♖xd5 34 ♖xd4 (34 fxe3? ♗xe3+) 34...♖xd4 35 fxe3 ♖xb4 is hopeless for White. Alekhine considered this game, along with the 34th, to be his best in the match. To me it in some ways resembles the 10th game of the match in Havana (1921), only there the victim was Lasker: the same uncertain play by the champion in the opening – and the same demonstration of the best aspects of the challenger's style!

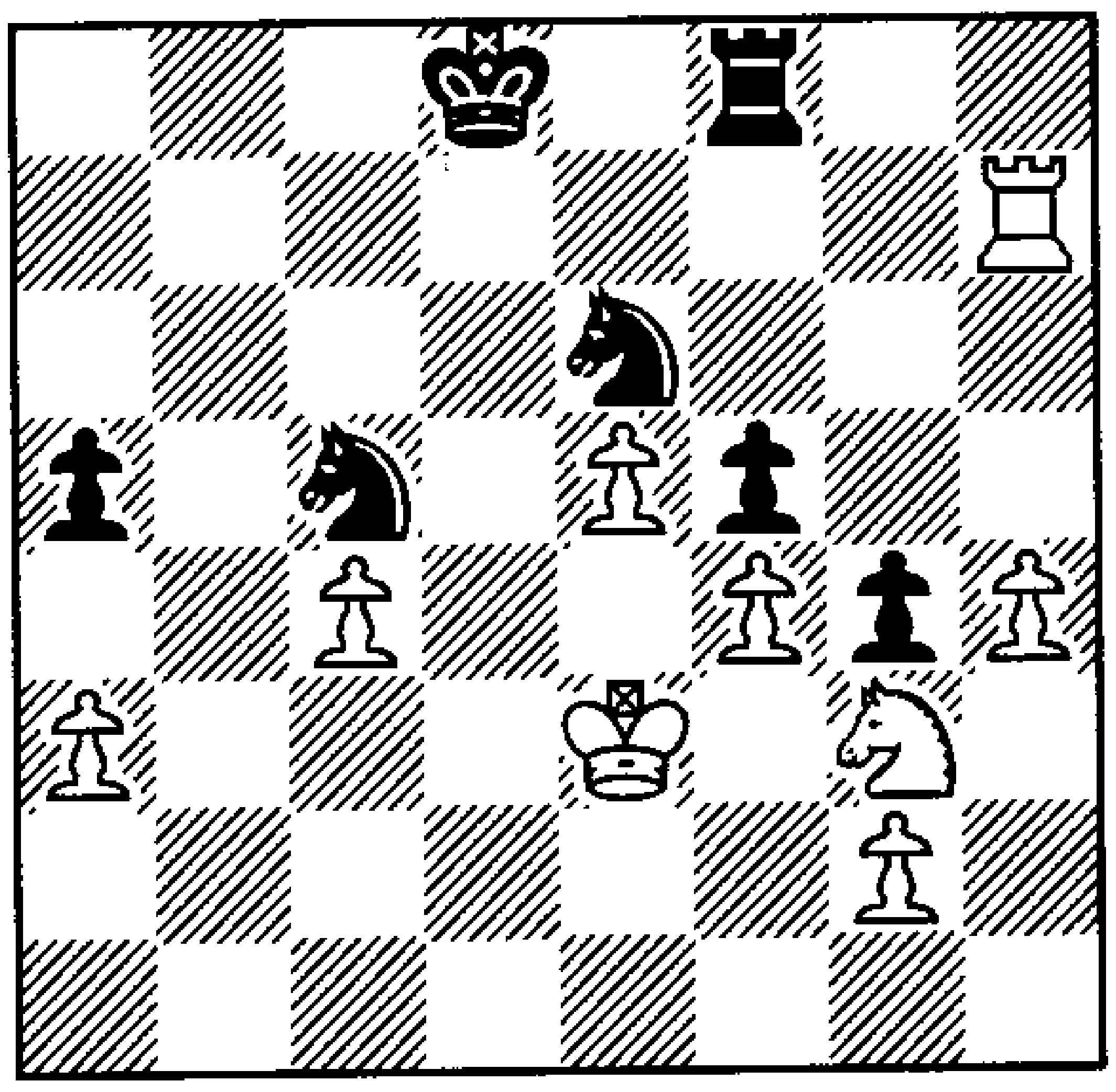
What again told was Alekhine's superiority in the evaluation of complex, dynamic positions, in the uniting of positional and tactical ideas, or more precisely – those three factors (material, time and quality of position), about which I spoke at the start of the chapter. In intricate, undetermined positions with mutual weaknesses Capablanca's brilliant intuition gave him trouble, and he would begin losing the thread of the game. Alekhine thought in a more non-standard way, keenly observed the correlation of the weaknesses and which pieces needed to be exchanged, and which retained. This was a serious step forward in the development of chess thinking, and Capa proved to be not ready for it...

Alekhine was leading 4-2 and Capablanca faced even more acutely the problem that had once tormented Lasker in Havana: how to defeat this incessant challenger? And here fortune smiled on the champion: he saved the very difficult 22nd game. In it too there was a complicated struggle, Alekhine again played very strongly, made a spectacular bishop sacrifice and was close to victory.

Game 129

A.Alekhine-J.R.Capablanca

World Championship Match,
Buenos Aires 1927, 22nd game



42 ♖a7?

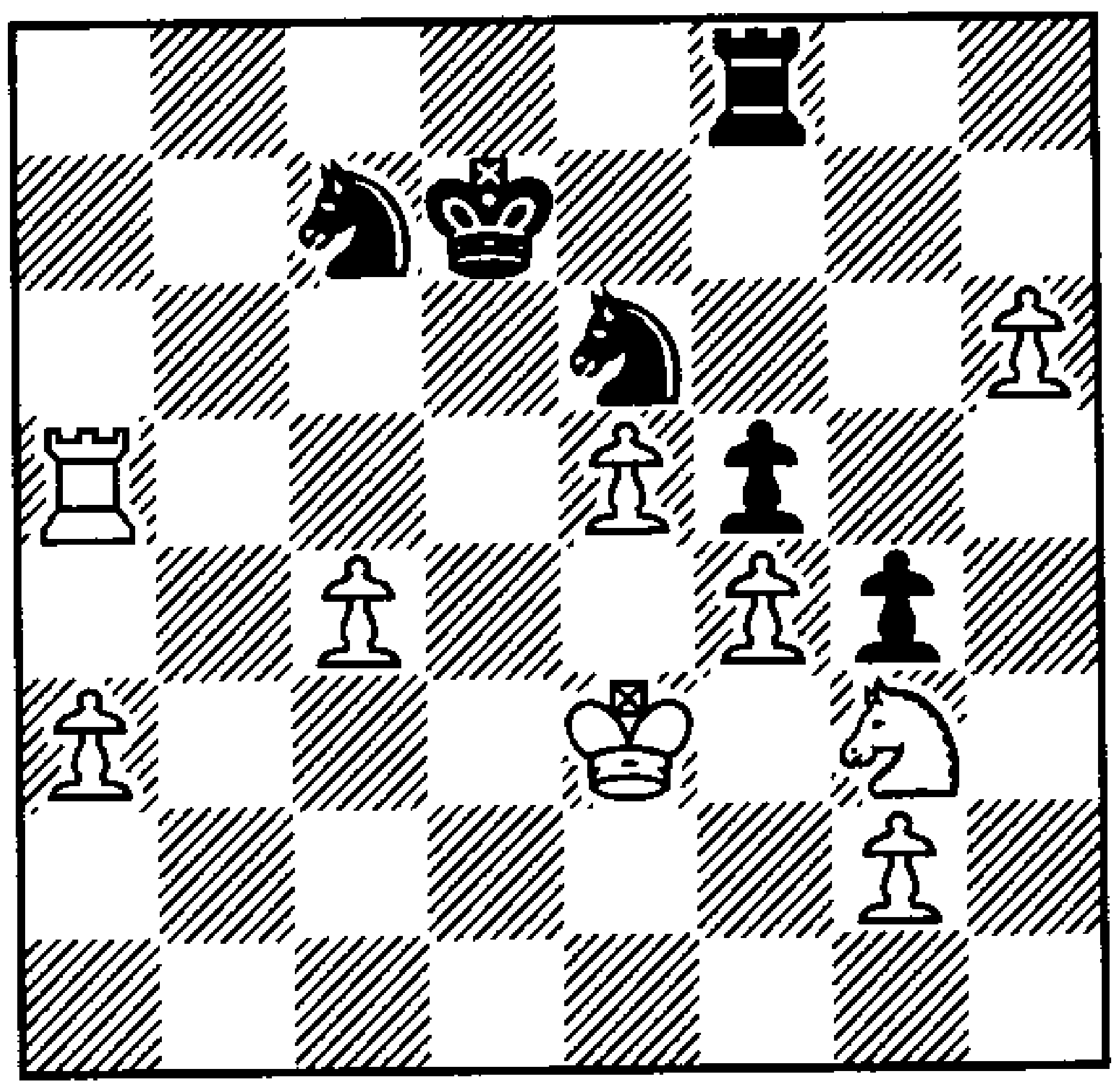
'An arrogant move, with which White quite needlessly deviates from his predetermined plan, and thus at least makes the win very much less clear. The simple 42 ♘e2! would not only have parried the opponent's only threat (...♘xf4 followed by ...♘e6+ and ...f5-f4+), but would also have brought the white knight into the game with decisive effect. For example, after the likely continuation 42...♔c8 43 ♘c3 ♖d8 44 ♘d5 Black could have quite calmly resigned.' (Alekhine)

42...♘c7!! (not 42...♘xf4?! 43 ♔xf4 ♘e6+ 44 ♔e3 f4+ 45 ♔e4 fxg3 because of 46 ♖a8+)
43 ♖xa5 ♘5e6 44 h5?

This finally throws away the win, although after 44 ♘e2 ♔d7 45 ♘d4 ♘xd4 46 ♔xd4 ♖b8! 47 ♖a7 ♔c6 48 e6 ♔b6 49 ♖a4 ♘xe6+ 50 ♔e5 ♖e8 51 ♔xf5 g3! Black would apparently have saved the game.

44...♔d7! 45 h6

If 45 ♘e2, then 45...♖b8!



45...♘xf4! (but now this rescues Black) **46 ♔xf4 ♘e6+ 47 ♔e3 f4+ 48 ♔f2 fxg3+ 49 ♔xg3 ♖h8! 50 ♖d5+**

Or 50 ♖a7+ ♘c7! 51 e6+ ♔c6 52 e7 ♔b6! equalising.

50...♔e7 51 c5 ♖xh6 52 c6 ♘f8 53 ♖c5 ♔d8 54 ♔xg4 ♖g6+ 55 ♔f3 ♔c7 56 g4 ♘e6! (but not 56...♖xc6? 57 ♖xc6+ ♔xc6 58 ♔e4) **57 ♖d5 ♘f8 58 ♖c5 ♘e6 59 ♖d5 ♘f8 60 ♖a5 ♖xc6** with a draw on the 87th move.

The result of this game distressed Alekhine: after all, in the event of him winning the score would have become 5-2, and the match would already have been practically decided. As it was, Capablanca gained a new lease of life, mobilised the remains of his strength and seized the initiative in the match. True, he annoyingly let his opponent off in the 27th game (*Game No.105*), which, in the words of Alekhine, was merely the just retribution for the 22nd, where he 'threw away an equally elementary and equally well deserved win.'

Then the challenger suffered the most difficult moment in the match: after barely saving the 28th game, he blundered and lost the 29th, in which he had almost achieved a draw by grandiose defence (*Game No.106*), and he was on the edge of the abyss in the 31st (*Game No.107*), where a loss would have cancelled out all his efforts, since the score would have become 4-4 (and at 5-5 Capa would have retained his title). But, fortunately for Alekhine, in an ending with an extra pawn his opponent overlooked the winning move...

Capablanca arrived for the 32nd game with hardly any strength left. Keenly sensing his condition, Alekhine acted determinedly: he played the Carlsbad Variation aggressively and creatively and, by threatening a direct attack on the king, obtained an endgame with an extra pawn. But here he suddenly returned the pawn to activate his rook, and gave the opponent an excellent drawing chance. Nevertheless, Capa was obviously dejected and on the 34th move he took the wrong pawn! However, in order to win Alekhine still had to overcome a desperate resistance, creating a classic example of the conversion of an advantage in an ending with rook and bishop against rook and bishop.

This was essentially the decisive game of the match. Speaking more broadly, in Buenos Aires there were three pairs of 'decisive game bunches': 11th-12th, 21st-22nd and 31st-32nd. The last pair finally broke the Cuban: 3-5 instead of 4-4 and two ruined endgames – failure in the stage which had long been considered Capablanca's private domain... In the 33rd game he conceded the white pieces without a fight: a draw in 18 moves. Alekhine testifies: 'After my win in the previous game the expression of my opponent's face showed that the outcome of the match was decided.'

Within a couple of days it was all over. For the 34th game Alekhine arrived with a great desire to win, but Capa, although he had become a shadow of himself, defended heroically. The game turned out to be very interesting and, if account is taken of its unique competitive significance, simply remarkable!

Game 130

A.Alekhine-J.R.Capablanca

World Championship Match,
Buenos Aires 1927, 34th game
Queen's Gambit D51

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♘bd7 5 e3 c6 6 a3

A prescription against the Cambridge Springs – Capablanca had also played this earlier. The move is, of course, passive, and Alekhine 'selected it here merely in order to come out of the book variations as rapidly as possible.' Apart from 6 ♘f3!, 6 ♗d3, 6 ♕c2 and 6 cxd5 were all tried in the match.

6...♗e7 7 ♘f3 0-0 (7...♘e4!?) **8 ♗d3 dxc4**

'A sound alternative was 8...h6 9 ♗h4 c5.' (Alekhine)

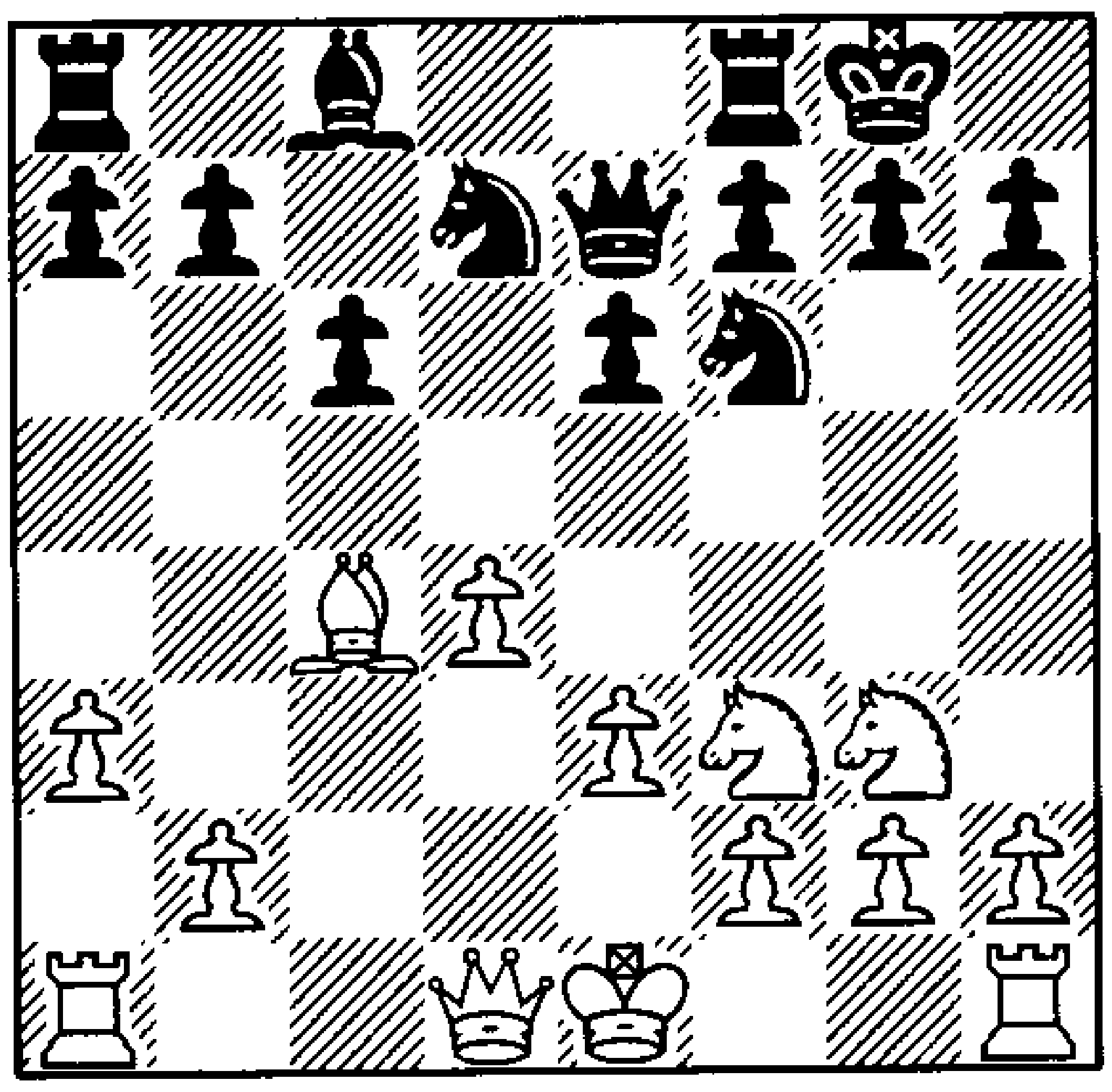
9 ♗xc4 ♘d5 10 ♗xe7 ♕xe7

'10...♘xc3 was a strong possibility, e.g. 11 ♗xd8 ♘xd1 12 ♗e7 ♖e8, or 11 ♕c2 ♕xe7 12 ♕xc3 c5 13 0-0 b6, and in both cases Black overcomes his development difficulties.' (Alekhine) Evidently that is what Black should have played, in order to exchange as many pieces as possible, but Capa thought that in any case he would be able to equalise: the position is a favourable version for Black of his favourite relieving system.

11 ♘e4!?

This promises White a more interesting game than 11 ♖c1 ♘xc3 12 ♖xc3 e5 13 dxe5 ♘xe5 14 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 15 0-0 (fifth game) 15...♗f5! 16 ♕b3 ♕e7 17 e4!? ♗g6! with equality (Alekhine).

11...♘5f6 (not bad was 11...♘5b6 and after the bishop moves – 12...e5, but Capa has his plan) **12 ♘g3**



12...c5

'The text manoeuvre has the slight drawback of not yet solving the problem of the development of the queen's bishop.' (Alekhine) The alternative was the variation 12...b6!? 13 0-0 ♗b7 14 e4 c5 15 ♖e1 (15 e5 ♘e4!) 15...cxd4, analogous to the game Alekhine-Maróczy (San Remo 1930), where instead of a2-a3 the useful move ♖c1 had been made.

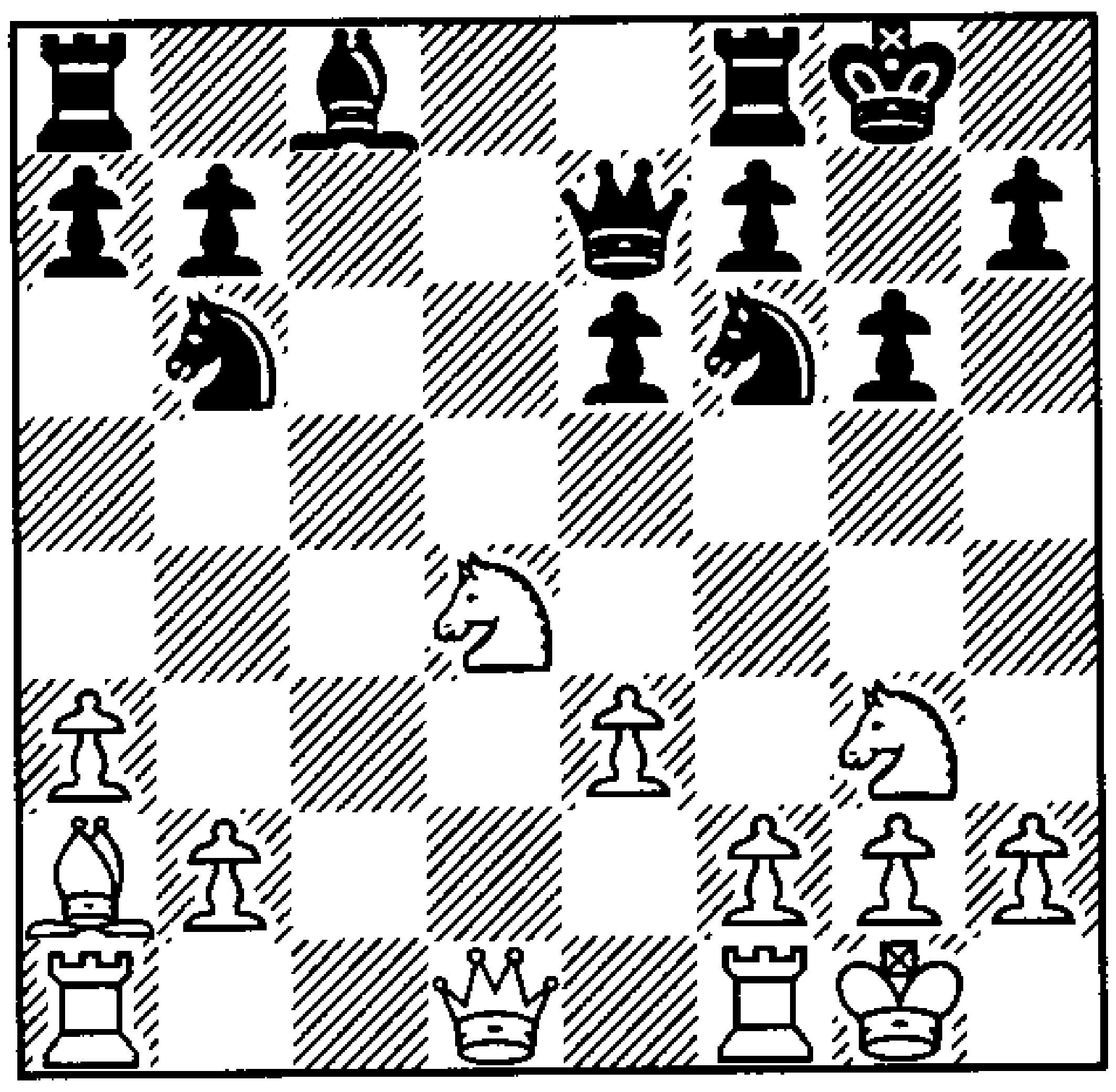
Perhaps even 12...e5 would have worked – 13 ♘f5 ♕e8 14 ♘d6 ♕e7 15 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 16 ♘g5 ♘d5 17 ♘xf7 ♕xf7! 18 e4 ♘7b6 19 ♗a2 ♕g6 etc., but there is no need for such complications.

13 0-0 ♘b6

Here too the simplest was 13...b6!? According to Alekhine, then 14 d5 is unpleasant, but after 14...exd5 15 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 16 ♕xd5 ♗a6 the chances are equal: what White wants to do with his knight on g3 is unclear. However, we now know how things stand, whereas then Capa played, as it seemed to him, in the safest way possible.

14 ♗a2 cxd4 15 ♘xd4 g6!

'This move is not obvious, but when one considers the situation more closely it is seen to be virtually essential. White was already threatening, e.g. in answer to 15...♗d7, to play e3-e4-e5 and win the square d6 for his knight or, if Black counters this with ...e6-e5, to invade f5 and thus establish a stable positional advantage.' (Alekhine)



16 ♖c1 (threatening a possible ♘b5) **16...♗d7 17 ♕e2** (17 ♖c7 ♕d6! 18 ♖xb7? ♗c8 would be stupid) **17...♖ac8 18 e4 e5 19 ♘f3 ♔g7**

'The text move, and especially the next one, brings his position suddenly into danger. Black should here exchange both rooks, as after 19...♖xc1 20 ♖xc1 ♖c8 21 ♖xc8+ ♘xc8 the move 22 ♘g5 could have been sufficiently met by 22...♗e8.' (Alekhine) But in my opinion, after 22 ♕c4! his position would have begun to creak.

Alekhine also considered 19...♗g4!? 20 h3 ♗xf3 21 ♕xf3, 'though this would have given cause for concern later on, since the disappearance of the bishop would have weakened the white squares in Black's camp.' After 21...♖xc1 22 ♖xc1 ♖c8 23 ♕e3 White would have retained a small plus.

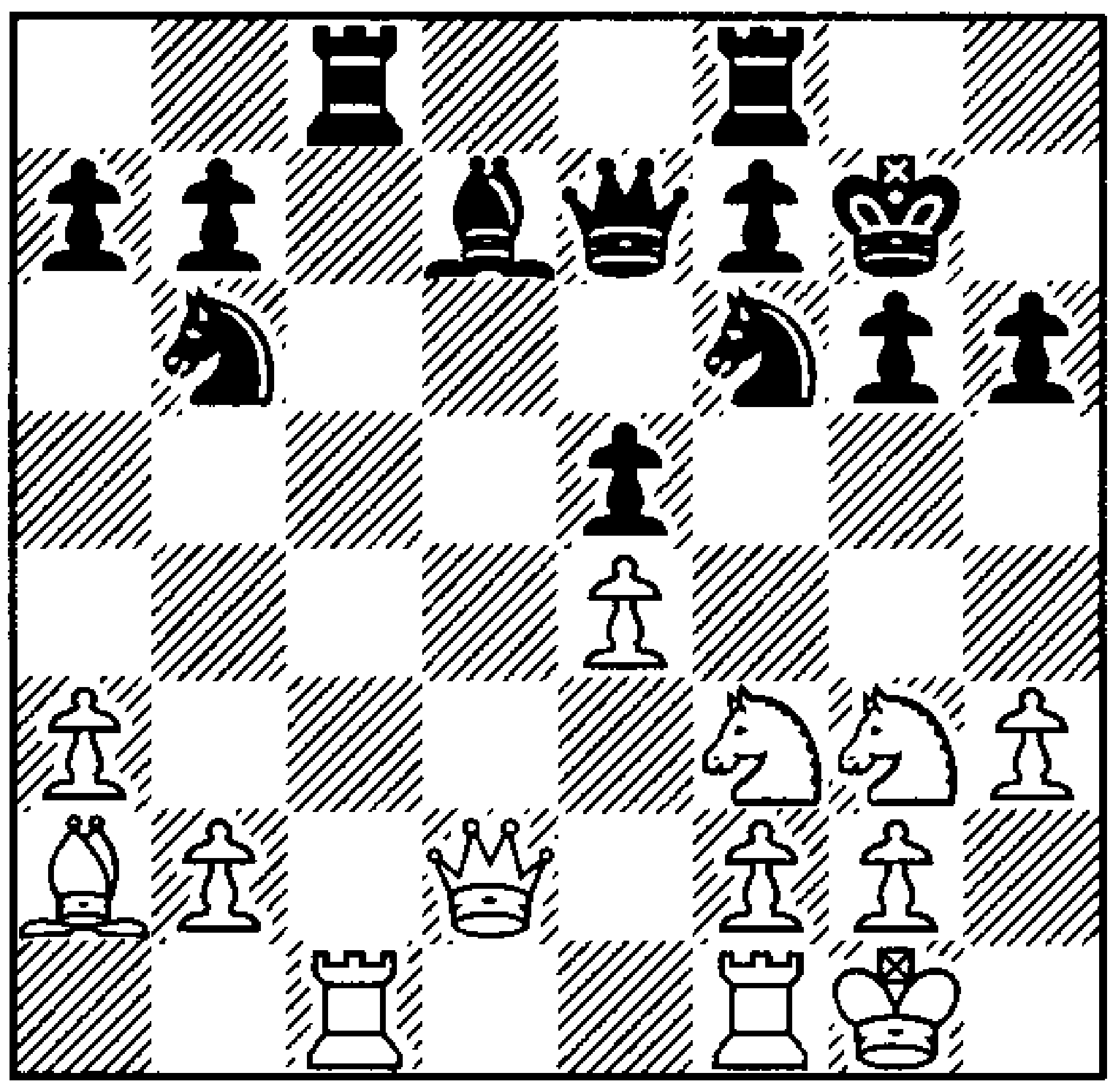
20 h3 h6!?

'This needlessly weakens his position and strengthens the opponent's reply.' (Alekhine) But I think that this is a normal move, like the previous one – they were condemned under the impression of the result of the game. 20...♖xc1?! 21 ♖xc1 ♖c8 22 ♖xc8 ♗xc8 was dubious because of 23 ♕b5! (23 ♘g5 h6 24 ♘xf7? ♗e6 25 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 26 ♘d8 ♕d7 wins for Black) 23...♘fd7 24 ♕a5 a6 25 ♕c3 ♕c5 26 ♕xc5 ♘xc5 27 ♘xe5 with advantage to White.

21 ♕d2!

A fine, multi-purpose manoeuvre. The

main threat is 22 ♕a5!



21...♗e6?!

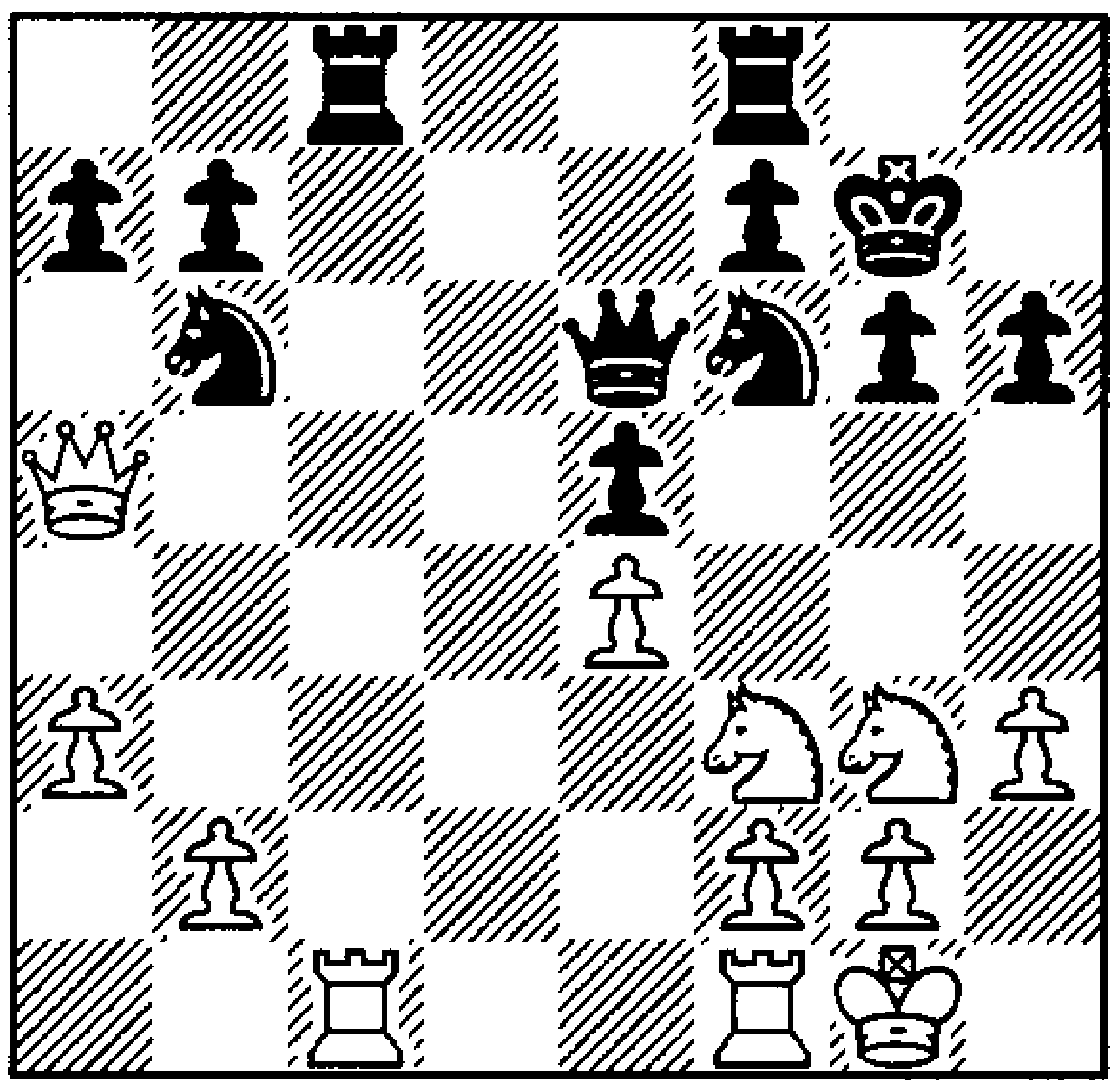
'There would be no point in trying to simplify the position: 21...♖xc1 (*21...♖c5 22 ♖xc5! ♕xc5 23 ♖c1 – G. K.*) 22 ♖xc1 ♖c8 23 ♖xc8, and if now 23...♘xc8 24 ♕c3 or 23...♗xc8 24 ♕a5, winning a pawn in either case. But the obvious counterattacks 21...♗c6 (or 21...♗b5) would also be unavailing, for in that case the white queen's effect would be felt in another way, this time in a surprise mating attack: 22 ♘h4!! ♘xe4 (*22...♔h7? 23 ♘hf5; 22...♗d7 23 ♕a5 ♘a4 24 ♕xa4! ♗xa4 25 ♘hf5+ gxf5 26 ♘xf5+ ♔h7 27 ♘xe7 – G. K.*) 23 ♘hf5+ gxf5 24 ♘xf5+ ♔g6 25 ♕xh6+ ♔xf5 26 g4 mate! Or 22...♗xe4 23 ♕e3! winning a piece.' (Alekhine) Excuse me, but after 23...♖cd8! 24 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 25 ♕xe4 ♖d4 the piece is regained, although White does retain the advantage with 26 ♘xg6! fxg6 27 ♕e3.

'The only move which offers some prospects of a successful defence is that suggested by Dr Lasker, 21...♘a4! (22 ♕a5 ♘xb2 is equal). Then White could have maintained a small positional plus by 22 ♖fd1.' (Alekhine) But after 22...♖fd8 it is not clear in what way Black's position is inferior: 23 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 24 ♗d5 b5 with a level game.

But Capablanca made a concrete simplifying move, very much in his style: he did not like all these uncertainties and calculations! According to Alekhine, now 'Black loses a pawn without compensation and thus, at least in theory, surrenders the game and also the match.' But in my opinion the crucial mistake is still to come.

22 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 23 ♕a5

Here it is, the decisive moment of the game and of the match.



23...♘c4?

'Or 23...♕b3 24 ♕xe5 (*24 ♘xe5 ♖xc1 25 ♖xc1 ♕xb2 26 ♘d3 ♕d4 27 ♕xa7 ♕xd3 28 ♕xb6 ♘xe4 is equal – G. K.*) 24...♘c4 25 ♕d4, and White hangs on to the plundered pawn.' (Alekhine) However, 24...♖fe8! is much stronger, for example: 25 ♘d4! (25 ♕d4 ♖cd8 26 ♘d2 ♕b5) 25...♖xe5 26 ♘xb3 ♘xe4 27 ♖xc8 ♘xg3! 28 ♖c7 ♘xf1 29 ♔xf1 ♖b5 30 ♘d4 ♖xb2 31 ♖xb7 a5 32 ♘c6 a4 33 ♘e5 ♘c4 34 ♖xb2 ♘xb2 35 ♔e2 f6 36 ♘d3 ♘c4 with equality. The variation is, of course, a conditional one, but in other branches, too, no direct win for White is apparent and things are closer to a draw.

In addition, also possible was 23...♘bd7!? 24 ♕xa7 ♕b3 25 ♕e3 (25 ♖fd1 ♖a8 26 ♕e3 ♕xb2 27 ♘h4 ♖h8) 25...♕xb2 26 ♘h4! (or 26 ♖b1 ♕c3) 26...♔h7 27 ♘hf5 ♘g8 28 ♖b1 ♕c3 29 ♘d6 ♕xe3 30 fxe3 ♖c3 31 ♖xb7 ♘gf6. Here Black holds on with difficulty, but nevertheless he holds on!

At any event, both these moves – 23...♕b3 and 23...♘bd7 – maintain material equality, whereas now Black loses a pawn.

24 ♕xa7 ♘xb2

No better is 24...b5 25 b3 ♘d6 26 ♕e3,

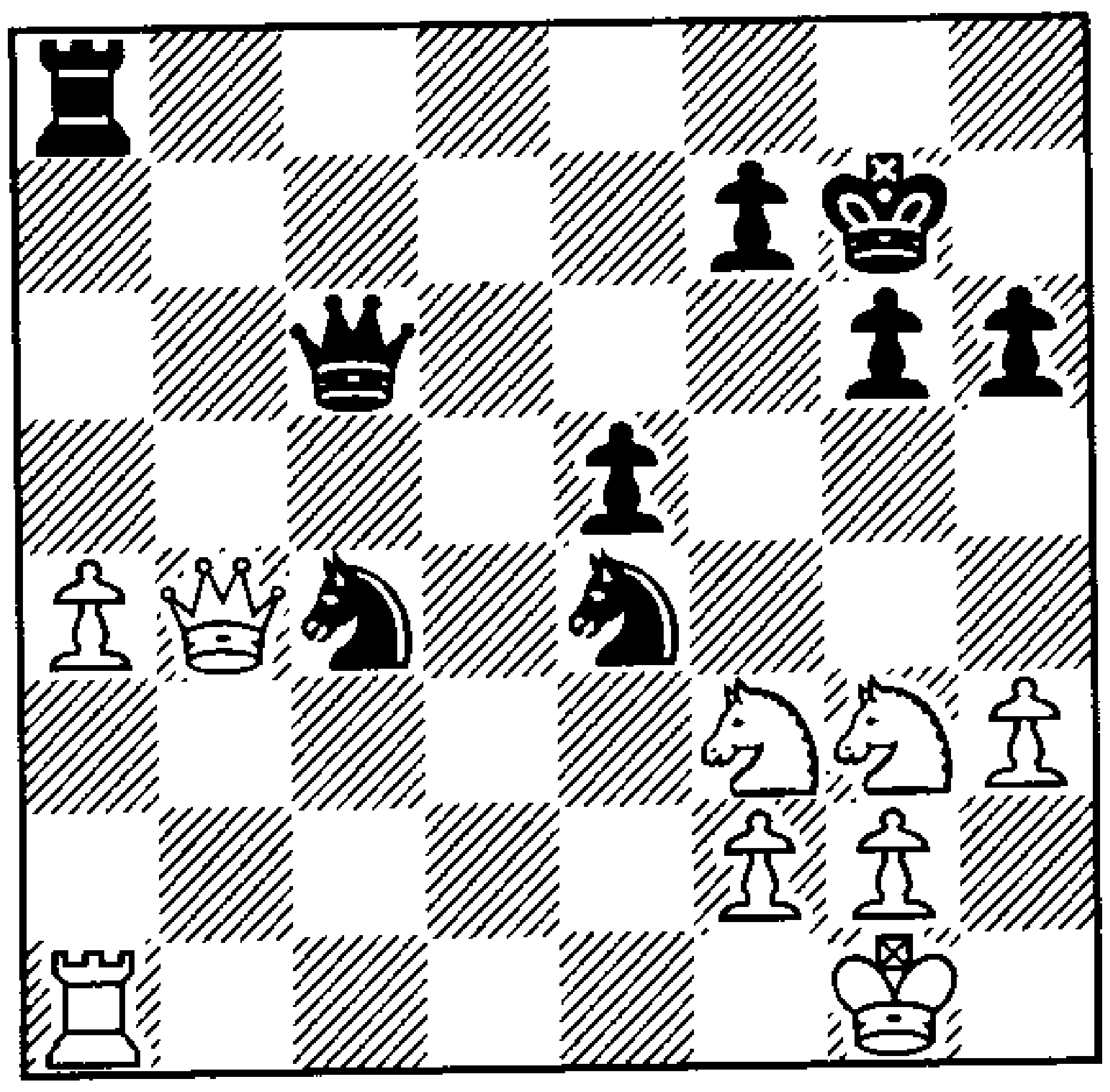
while if 24...♖a8, then 25 ♕c5! (but not 25 ♕xb7? ♖fb8 26 ♕c7 ♖c8 equalising) 25...♘xb2 26 ♘xe5 ♖fc8 27 ♕d4 wins.

25 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 26 ♕xb7 ♘c4 27 ♕b4 ♖a8 28 ♖a1 (28 a4!?) **28...♕c6!**

'Threatening to blockade the a-pawn by 29...♖a4 and also (at least apparently) to win the e4-pawn. But White's two next moves put the situation in the true light.' (Alekhine)

29 a4! ♘xe4

Interesting tactical duels now begin.



30 ♘xe5!

'Avoiding the pitfall 30 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 31 ♖c1 ♖c8 32 ♘xe5? (32 ♘d2? ♘xd2) 32...♘e3!! 33 ♕xe4 ♖xc1+ 34 ♔h2 ♘f1+ followed by ...♘g3+ and ...♘xe4, after which Black could even win.' (Alekhine) However, I am not sure that after 32 a5! Black is able to stop the swiftly advancing a-pawn: 32...♕f4 33 ♖c3 ♖c6 34 ♕a4 ♖c8 35 a6 etc. Alekhine played more solidly, retaining his extra pawn: after all, what was being decided was a matter of vital importance...

30...♕d6!

'Taking play into a heavy piece endgame, where, as is known, it is very hard to convert a pawn advantage.' (Kotov) Inferior was 30...♘xe5 31 ♕xe4 ♕c3 32 ♖b1.

31 ♕xc4 ♕xe5 32 ♖e1 ♘d6 33 ♕c1!

Convincing play. Both 33 ♖xe5? ♘xc4 and 33 ♕b4? ♖xa4 (with equal chances in each case) were bad for White.

33...♕f6 (33...♕d4 or 33...♕a5 – 34 ♖d1) **34 ♘e4! ♘xe4 35 ♖xe4**

'I envisaged this position when playing 29 a4. The winning procedure consists in combining the threats connected with the passed pawn and an attack against the somewhat exposed black king. First and foremost, White will succeed in controlling the important diagonal a1-h8.' (Alekhine)

35...♖b8

Hinting at ...♖b2. If 35...♖a5, White, after first playing g2-g3 and h3-h4, would 'then invade the back rank with his pieces.'

36 ♖e2! (36 a5?! ♕f5!) **36...♖a8 37 ♖a2 ♖a5 38 ♕c7!** (38 ♕a1!?) **38...♕a6**

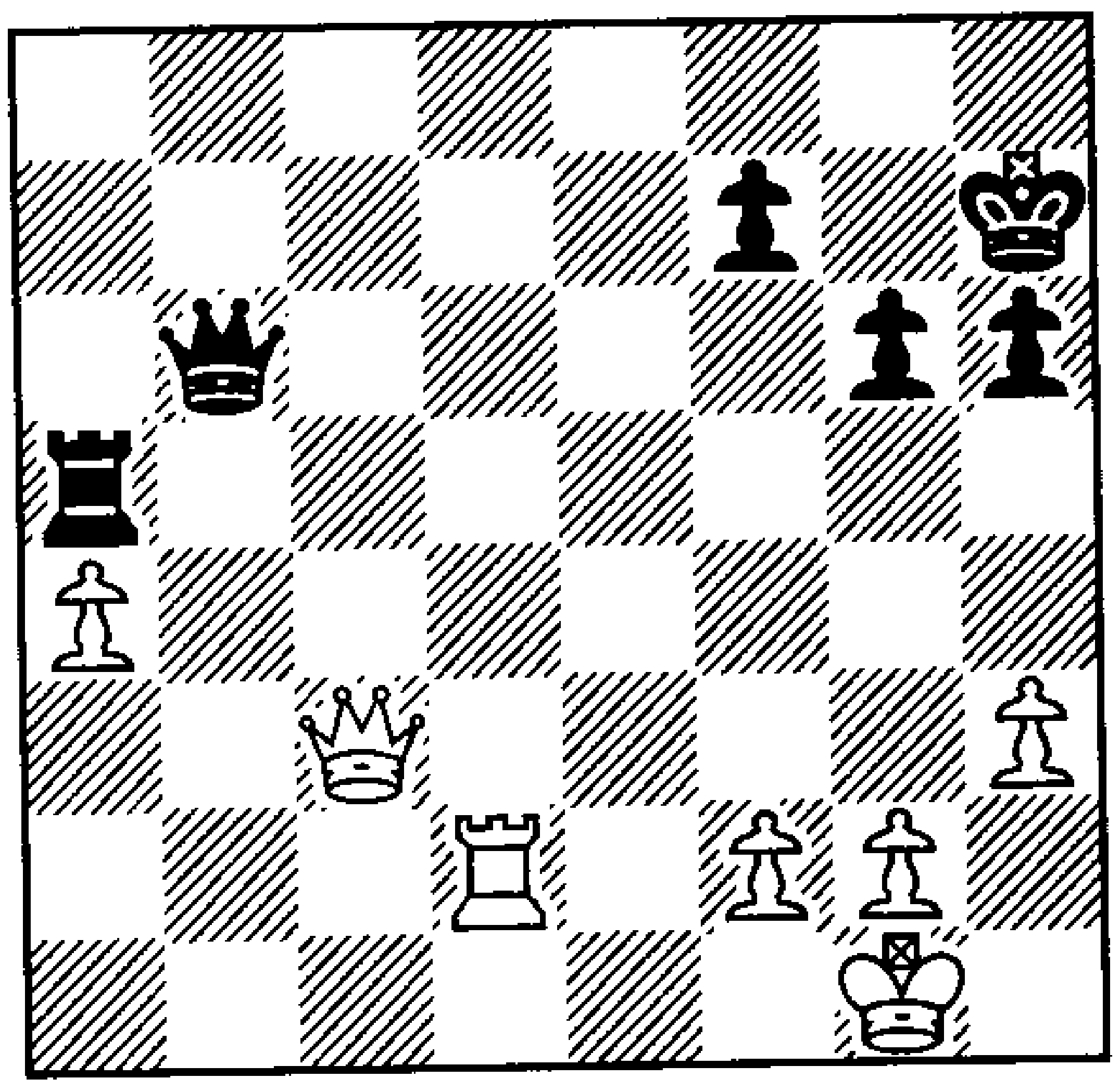
'The only way to prevent the advance of the passed pawn.' (Alekhine) But in my opinion, White could have been disturbed more by the attempt to set up a blockade by 38...♖g5!? 39 ♖a3 ♖f5 40 ♕c2 ♖a5.

39 ♕c3+ ♔h7 40 ♖d2!

'Skilfully relieving the blockade of the passed pawn. There is a threat not only of 41 ♖d8 with an immediate win, but also of 41 ♖d7 leading to a sustained harassment of the enemy king.' (Alekhine)

40...♕b6

40...♖xa4? 41 ♖d8 g5 42 ♕h8+ ♔g6 43 ♕e5 etc. was hopeless. Here the first time control was reached, and the game was adjourned.



41 ♖d7

The sealed move. The following day, during the resumption, Capablanca fought on to the last bullet...

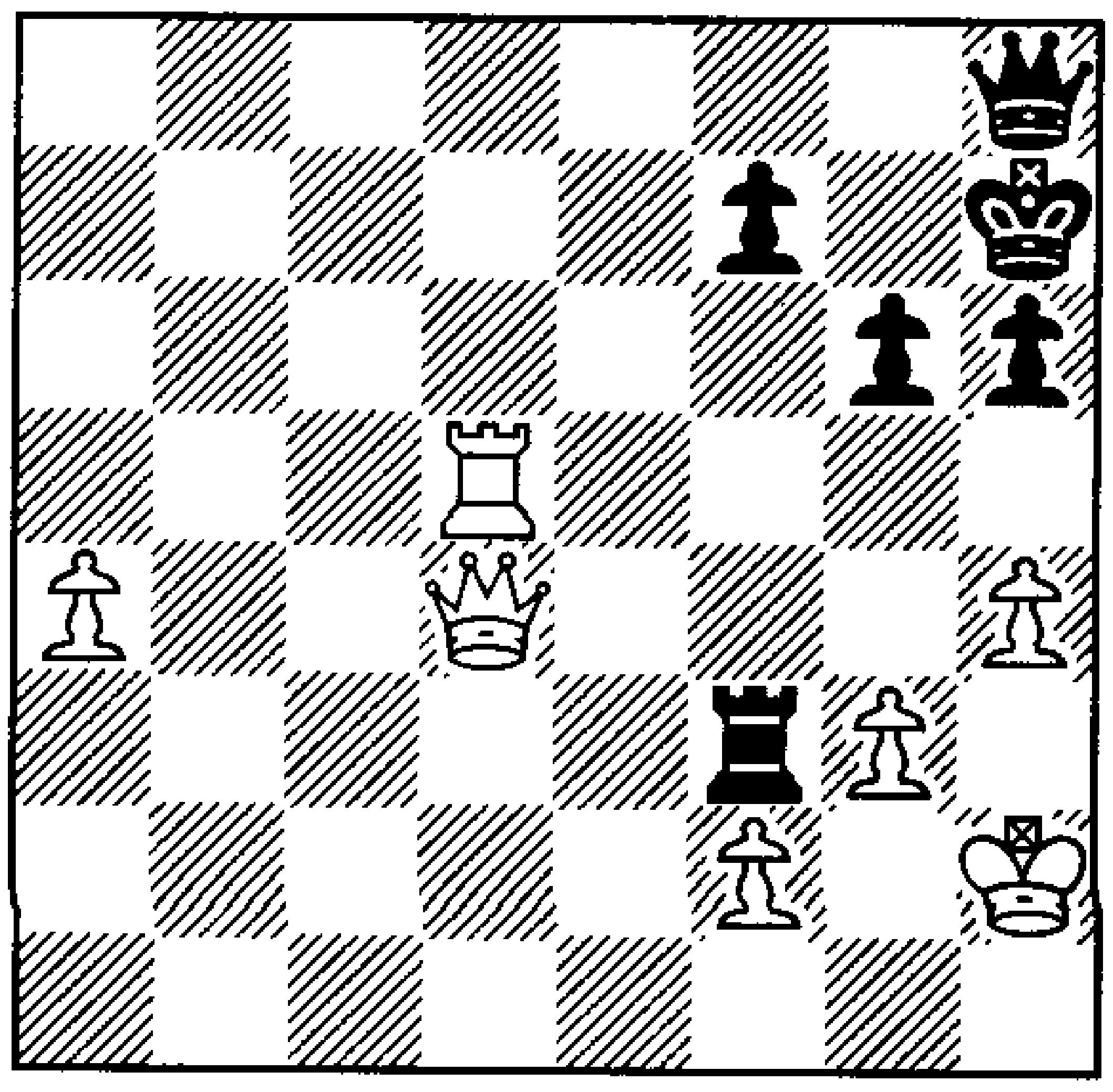
47...♕b1+ 42 ♔h2 ♕b8+ 43 g3 ♖f5 44 ♕d4! (with the threat of 45 a5 and ♖d8) **44...♕e8 45 ♖d5!** (but not 45 ♖d8? ♖xf2+ 46 ♕xf2 ♕xd8 47 ♕xf7+ ♔h8) **45...♖f3**

Going into the queen ending was, of course, hopeless.

46 h4!

'46 a5 ♕e2 47 ♔g2 was also feasible (*or 46 ♔g2 ♖a3 47 ♖d7 – G. K.*). However, before undertaking anything decisive, White wants to stabilise the pawn position on the kingside.' (Alekhine)

46...♕h8!? (46...h5 47 a5!)



47 ♕b6!

47 ♕xh8+ ♔xh8 48 ♔g2 was premature because of 48...♖a3, when after 49 a5 it would have been far harder for White to win than in the game: the enemy rook is behind the passed pawn!

47...♕a1

If 47...♕a8 decisive was 48 ♖d8 ♖xf2+ (48...♕xa4 49 ♕b2) 49 ♕xf2 ♕xd8 50 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 51 ♕xg6 ♕d2+ 52 ♔h3 ♕d7+ 53 ♕g4.

48 ♔g2 ♖f6

After 48...♖a3 White would have won by 49 ♖d7 ♔g8 (49...♔g7 50 ♕b7 ♕f6 51 ♖xf7+! ♕xf7 52 ♕b2+; 49...♕a2 50 ♕f6) 50 ♕d8+ ♔g7 51 ♕e7 ♕a2 52 ♕e5+ ♔h7 53 ♕f6.

49 ♕d4!

'Now the right moment to exchange has come, as it is the *white* rook that will get behind the passed pawn.' (Alekhine) White's conduct of the technical stage of the game cannot be praised too highly.

49...♕xd4 50 ♖xd4 ♔g7 (if 50...♖a6, then simply 51 ♔f3 and then ♔e4-d5: the rook at d4 holds everything under control) **51 a5 ♖a6 52 ♖d5 ♖f6 53 ♖d4 ♖a6 54 ♖a4**

The rook takes up its 'lawful' place, which signifies the beginning of the end.

54...♔f6 55 ♔f3 ♔e5 56 ♔e3 h5 57 ♔d3 ♔d5 58 ♔c3 ♔c5 59 ♖a2 ♔b5 60 ♔b3

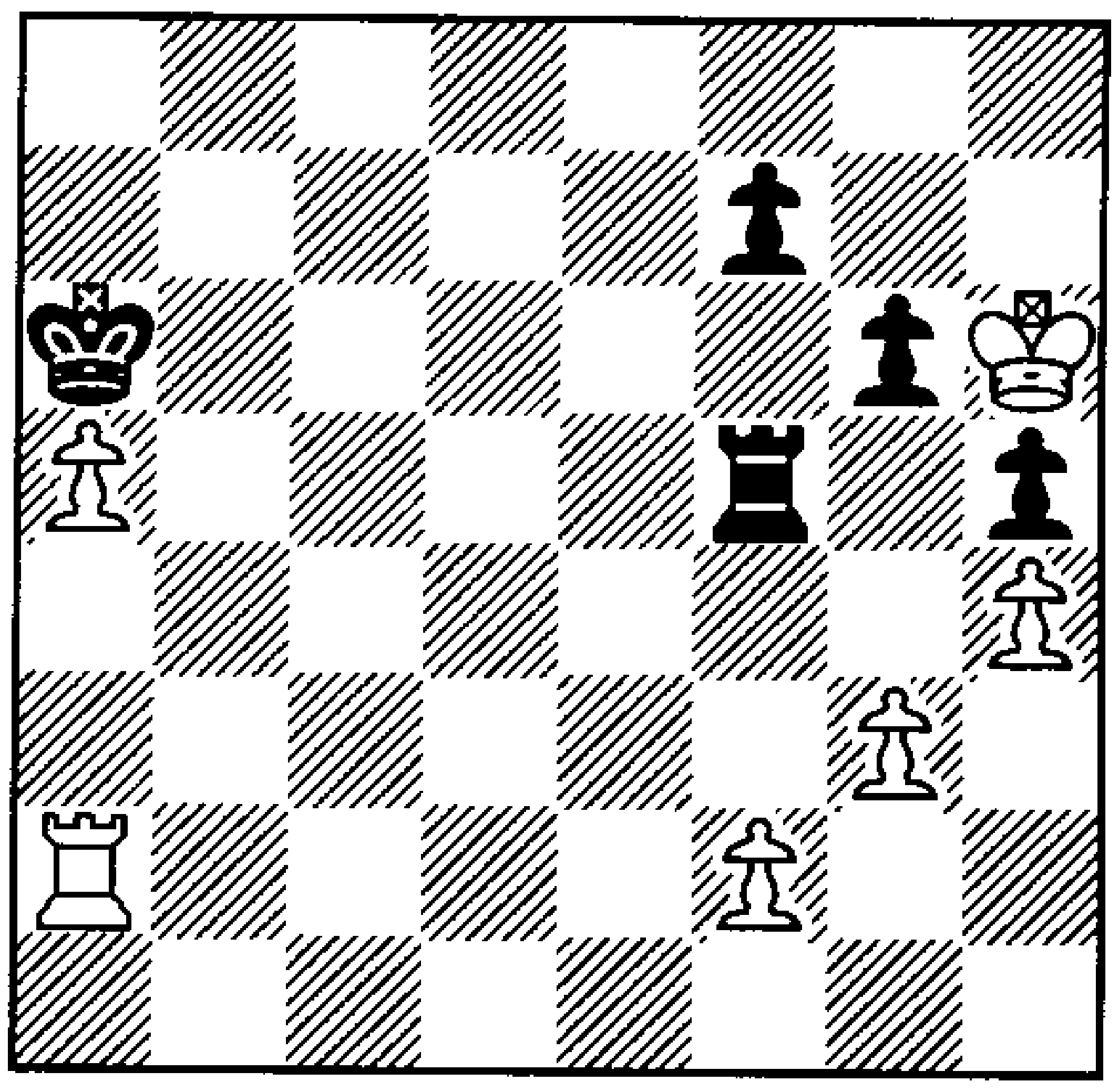
'White makes use of every opportunity, by repetition of moves, to gain time with the clock, so as to avoid a slip just before the capture of the title.' (Alekhine)

60...♔c5 61 ♔c3 ♔b5 62 ♔d4! (the start of the decisive attack on the kingside pawns)

62...♖d6+

Or 62...♔b4 63 ♖a1! ♔b3 64 ♔c5 and wins.

63 ♔e5 ♖e6+ 64 ♔f4 ♔a6 (if 64...f6, then 65 a6! ♖xa6 66 ♖xa6 ♔xa6 67 ♔e4 wins – Tartakower) **65 ♔g5 ♖e5+ 66 ♔h6 ♖f5**



67 f4

'Understandably excited in sight of my desired goal, I lengthened the struggle with this over-hasty pawn move (up to here I believe that I found the correct move all the way through this decisive game). The simplest was 67 ♔g7! ♖f3 68 ♔g8 ♖f6 69 ♔f8! ♖f3 (69...♖f5 70 f4) 70 ♔g7 ♖f5 71 f4 and Black would have to resign.' (Alekhine)

67...♖c5! 68 ♖a3 ♖c7 (68...♖f5 69 ♔g7 and ♖e3-e5) **69 ♔g7**

After 69 f5 Tartakower suggests 69...♖c6! 70 ♔g7 gxf5 71 ♔xf7 f4! 72 gxf4 ♖c4, but here 73 f5 ♖xh4 74 f6 concludes matters.

69...♖d7 70 f5

'This breakthrough does of course also win, but a more forceful way was 70 ♔f6! ♖c7 71 f5 gxf5 (or 71...♖c6+ 72 ♔xf7 gxf5 73 ♖f3) 72 ♔xf5 ♖c5+ 73 ♔f6 ♖c7 74 ♖f3 ♔xa5 75 ♖f5+ and wins.' (Alekhine)

70...gxf5 71 ♔h6 f4 72 gxf4 ♖d5 73 ♔g7 ♖f5 74 ♖a4 ♔b5 75 ♖e4! (it is time to give up the a-pawn) **75...♔a6 76 ♔h6**

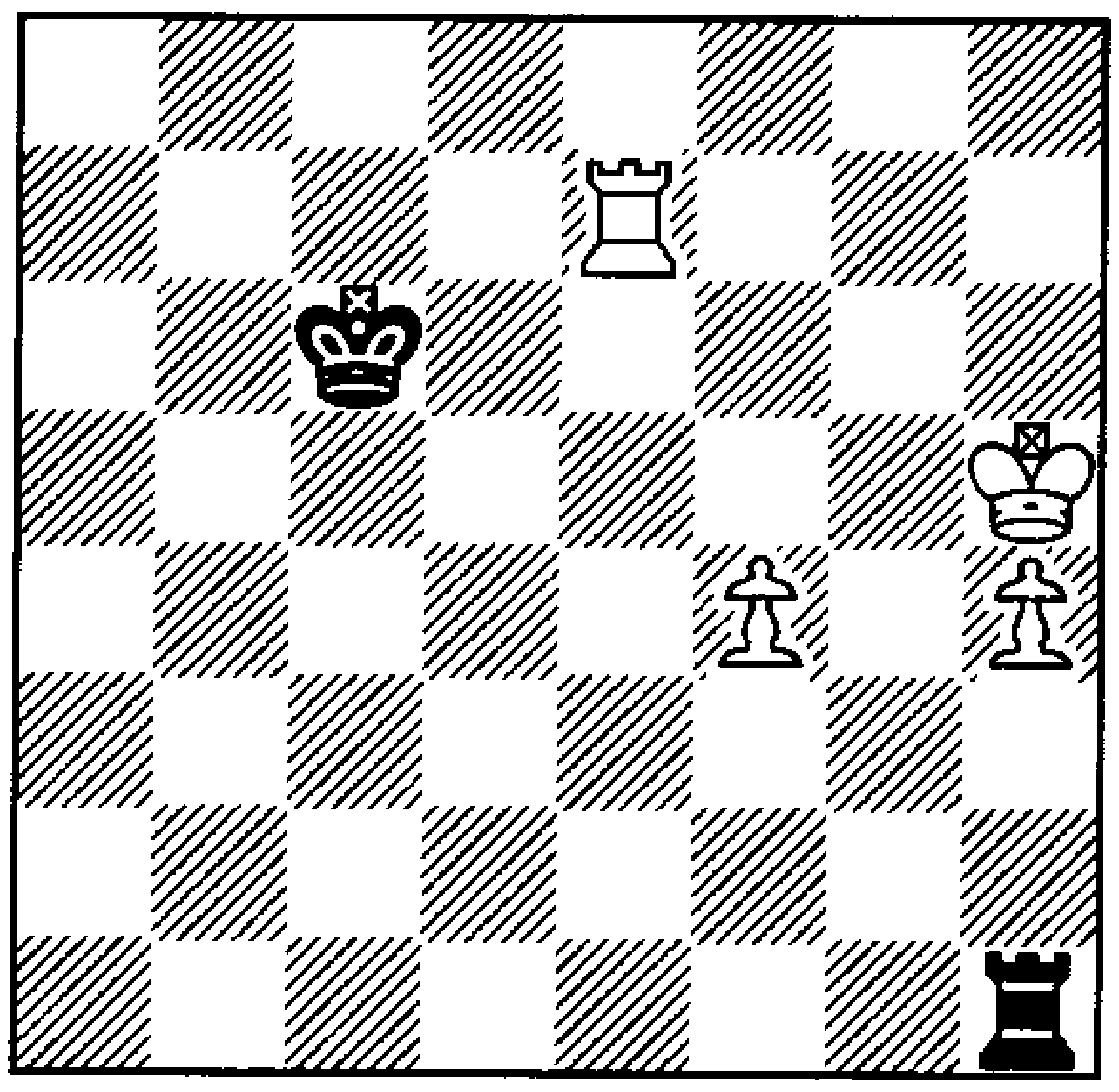
According to Tartakower, White would also have won by 76 ♔g8 ♖f6 (76...♔b7 77 ♖e7+ ♔a6 78 ♖xf7) 77 ♔f8 ♔xa5 (77...♖f5 78 ♔g7 – zugzwang) 78 ♔e7!

76...♖xa5

'Finally accepting the inevitable.' (Alekhine) After 77...♔b7 (or 76...♔a7) White wins by both the cheerful 77 ♖e5 ♖xf4 78 ♔xh5 ♖f1 79 ♖c5 f5 (79...♖f6 80 ♔g4) 80 ♔g5 f4 81 ♖f5 f3 82 ♔g4, and the cold-blooded 77 ♔g7 ♔a6 78 ♔g8 ♖f6 79 ♔f8 ♔xa5 (79...♖f5 80 ♔g7) 80 ♔e7 ♖b6 (80...♖f5 81 ♖e5+) 81 ♔xf7.

77 ♖e5 ♖a1 78 ♔xh5 ♖g1 79 ♖g5 ♖h1 80 ♖f5 ♔b6 81 ♖xf7 ♔c6 82 ♖e7 1-0

Here the game was again adjourned, and Capablanca's sad words flew right round the world: 'I think that Alekhine is bound to win...'



The following day, 29th November, without resuming the game, Black resigned. The Cuban sent by messenger a letter written in French:

'Dear Mr Alekhine! I resign the game. You are therefore the world champion. Please accept my congratulations and best wishes... Yours sincerely, J. R. Capablanca.'

Later the ex-champion nevertheless went to the chess club and congratulated his opponent personally: they shook hands and embraced to a storm of applause. But attendance at the farewell banquet on 8th December, where Alekhine was proclaimed champion, was already unbearable for Capa...

Generally speaking, apart from the first and third games, all of the wins in this match were achieved in a fierce, tenacious struggle – this was chess on a grand scale! Behind the abundance of draws, few realised that this was an unusual match and that a new era in chess was beginning. However, this did not escape the attention of the wise Lasker, a witness of various eras.

First he congratulated the new champion. 'I welcome the brilliant victory of Alekhine, who has realised the burning dream of Chigorin, of whom he is a direct descendent, both by the fervour of his genius and by the temperament of his play.' And then he declared: 'The conclusions from the match for the entire chess world are enormous: a *rejuvenating* not only of strategic principles or theoretical variations, but also of the culture of the game itself, a rejuvenating which had become obviously *necessary*, in order to avoid the stagnation threatening our art!'

The match showed that the post-Steinitz era of purely classical chess was ending – and a new game was beginning. Whereas Capablanca gained his victories by rising above numb banalities, Alekhine simply played another sort of chess! In Buenos Aires his creative credo definitively took shape...

Also interesting is the observation of Réti, who commented that Alekhine skilfully directed the match along 'lines, set by Lasker – along the lines of psychological struggle' and 'he showed (we, however, already knew this) that he is a better psychologist than Capablanca.' And indeed, Capa clearly underestimated the role of the psychological factor, whereas Alekhine followed in Lasker's footsteps, saying:

'For my victory over Capablanca I am indebted primarily to my superiority in the field of psychology. Capablanca played, relying almost exclusively on his rich intuitive talent. But for the chess struggle nowadays one needs a subtle knowledge of human nature, an understanding of the opponent's psychology. Earlier they fought only with the pieces, but we also fight with the opponent – with his will, his nerves, his individual peculiarities, and – last but not least – with his vanity. This plays an extremely important role...'

Capa admitted that 'in this match there was a fierce struggle and my opponent played better, and hence he deserved his success.' Alekhine also put down his victory to better play, adding that he 'played like he had never played in his life'. However, years later, after the death of the Cuban, he was to write: 'How did it happen that Capablanca lost the match? I have to admit that I still cannot give an exact reply to this question, since in 1927 I did not think that I was superior to my opponent. Possibly the main cause of his defeat was an exaggerated impression of his own strength, arising after his crushing victory in New York 1927, and an underestimation of my strength.'

More precisely, the decisive role was played by that factor about which I have already spoken: all his life victory had come to Capa comparatively easily, and he was not accustomed to strongly exerting himself – and in the match with Alekhine (this is where the underestimation told!) he realised *too late* that he would really have to exert himself...

Early in 1928 Alekhine returned triumphantly to Paris, where he appeared in the Palais Royale, the Rotonde, the Café de la Régence, and of course the Russian Club – the cultural centre of Russians abroad, where a splendid reception was arranged in his honour. The following morning the Paris émigré newspapers quoted a toast he had made: 'That the myth of the invincibility of the Bolsheviks should be dispelled, just as the myth of Capablanca's invincibility had been dispelled!'

Moscow reacted instantly – in the words of the same state prosecutor Krylenko: 'After his speech in the Russian Club we are finished with citizen Alekhine – he is our enemy and from now on we will regard him only as an enemy.' Take note: this was obvious progress compared with 1925, when Alekhine was only 'an alien element'...

A Convenient Opponent

Of course, Capa was eager to regain the crown. How this return match did not come about is a truly like a detective story, and I will try at least partially to reproduce the chronological sequence of events.

12 December 1927. The last meeting of Alekhine with Capablanca in Buenos Aires, at which they discuss the conditions for a new match and the ex-champion suggests limiting the number of games, but the champion replies that 'he was fundamentally opposed to any changes in the rules.' But, according to Alekhine, they part amicably.

End of January 1928. 'I am sure that Capablanca will challenge me to a return match,' Alekhine declares in Paris. 'I will accept a challenge on the conditions of the previous match and I will undertake to play the new match no later than a year from the moment that the official challenge is received. Capablanca is returning to New York in February – it follows that in March I can expect a challenge from him.'

February 1928. A fatal delay by Capablanca: he sends a letter to the FIDE President Rueb (and a copy to Alekhine) with the suggestion that the rules for future matches for the world championship should be changed: the first to win six games, but not more than 16 games, after which the player leading will be declared the champion, and in the event of a draw the champion will retain his title.

29 February 1928. Alekhine replies with an angry open letter to Capablanca: 'Having lost the title, you want to change the conditions that you yourself imposed in London on all your future opponents. And you go in for this, knowing of my categorical refusal to change the rules! You suggest limiting the number of games to 16, referring to your "experience" in Buenos Aires. Although in our match I could essentially have been the winner at any moment, beginning with the 12th game, I think that neither I, nor the entire chess world, would have been satisfied with such a victory... Do you really think that in a return match I will allow conditions that reduce chess to a game of roulette?'

4 April – 5 May 1928. Bogoljubow wins a match against Euwe for the title of FIDE champion (5½-4½). Rueb announces that 'he sympathises with the views expressed by Alekhine,' and suggests that henceforward, after the return match, matches should be played every three years, the first to score four wins and not more than 25 games; moreover that each year FIDE will decide on the four best grandmasters, and the first of them will be named as the official challenger for the world championship; now this should be considered to be Bogoljubow.

Mid-May 1928. The British Chess Federation introduces its project, restricting a match for the crown to 20 games. Alekhine, who is touring England, states that FIDE's aim 'to take power into its hands' is premature and that in principle he is ready to play with any outstanding master, but for the moment he gives preference to the two ex-champions – Capablanca and Lasker, in view of their past successes and enormous prestige; besides, he has promised to play a return match with Capablanca under the previous conditions, so that others must wait...

5 August 1928. At the 5th FIDE Congress in The Hague, Bogoljubow is confirmed as the FIDE champion and the official challenger for the world championship. It is decided that the match regulations should be modified by a special commission, which will include Alekhine. At the closing banquet the world champion announces that he is agreeable to playing a third match with Capablanca under the conditions worked out jointly with FIDE, but that a second match can proceed only under the previous conditions.

Mid-August 1928. Capablanca's representative Dr Lederer (the organiser of the 1924 and 1927 New York tournaments) sends Alekhine a letter, in which he states that his client is ready to play a return match under the previous conditions. In reply Alekhine demands an official written challenge from Capablanca himself.

24 August 1928. Bogoljubow wins the strong tournament in Bad Kissingen, a point ahead of Capablanca (despite another defeat in their individual game). And on *28 August* he sends Alekhine an official challenge to a match for the world championship and asks for a reply as to whether the champion agrees 'to play this match during 1929'.

11 September 1928. Alekhine replies to Bogoljubow's letter: 'In principle I accept your challenge – the first since I won the title – and I do not object to the match taking place in 1929. It goes without saying that the match can proceed only under the conditions of the London agreement (1922), which, incidentally, was signed by us both.'

End of September 1928. Bogoljubow travels specially to Bern, where Alekhine is on tour, and discusses with the champion the question of the dates and conditions of the coming match.

8 October 1928. After arriving at the tournament in Berlin, Capablanca sends Alekhine an official challenge for a match 'under the London rules of 1922'.

12 October 1928. Alekhine instantly replies that he has already accepted a challenge from Bogoljubow, but that he will also take Capablanca's challenge into account. That same day he sends a letter to Bogoljubow: 'Dear Sir, I have received an official challenge from J. R. Capablanca, and in view of this new factor I ask you in the three-month period that expires on 15 January 1929 to deposit the sum of $500 stipulated in the London rules... If this sum will not be deposited, I will consider myself obliged to accept the challenge of Capablanca.'

23 December 1928 – 6 January 1929. Bogoljubow wins a second match against Euwe (again 5½-4½). The challenger experiences serious difficulties in raising not only the prize fund for the match, but even the deposit of $500. And in early January Alekhine visits Amsterdam, where he holds discussions with Bogoljubow and the Dutch organisers. Then the Dutch travel to see Alekhine in Paris.

10 January 1929. Dutch players raise and deposit for Bogoljubow the necessary sum of $500, of which Alekhine is immediately informed.

13 January 1929. Alekhine replies to the Dutch that he has received their notification and on the same day he expresses to Capablanca his 'regret at it being impossible to accept at the given moment his challenge of 8.10.1928.'

March 1929. 'If the remaining sum is raised, the Alekhine-Bogoljubow match will take place in the second half of 1929,' writes the chess magazine *Shakhmatny Listok*. 'Thus Alekhine will have obtained what he wanted, and the return match with Capablanca, which he did not much relish, is deferred not only for the whole of 1929, but also, apparently, for a highly indefinite period.'

First half of 1929. In a number of interviews Alekhine explains his decision as being due to Capablanca's intractability and, in particular, he states: 'A fight with Bogoljubow interests me far more than a match with Capablanca. Bogoljubow plays completely differently to Capablanca, and he is a more dangerous opponent. He is an outstanding master of the opening; his play is notable for its exceptional boldness.'

9 July 1929. In Wiesbaden an agreement on the Alekhine-Bogoljubow match is signed, differing from the London rules (cf. p.299): play is to a maximum of 30 games, but the winner must score at least six wins; irrespective of the outcome of the match, Alekhine is to receive $6,000, and Bogoljubow all that is raised above this sum. Later it was said that the challenger had not in fact raised the $10,000 and that he would play only for the title.

30 July – 27 August 1929. At the most important tournament of the year in Carlsbad, Capa shares second place (behind Nimzowitsch), while Bogoljubow, who has decided to unwind before the match, finishes eighth. Alekhine is present at the tournament in the capacity of correspondent for the *New York Times* (before this he played in two small events, one a lightning tournament, with an overall score of +15 =2). The organisers allow him to cross the barrier and stroll among the participants – Capablanca twice protests, but in vain... The champion and the ex-champion no longer greet each other and are not on speaking terms.

End of August 1929. In an interview for the same *New York Times* Capablanca declares: 'I hope that the match in Wiesbaden will not end in failure, as some are forecasting, and that the winner will not try to avoid a battle with me. I am ready to play anyone and at any time... Alekhine, after stating that he would play a match only on the conditions of the London agreement (i.e. up to six wins, draws not counting), will play with Bogoljubow a limited number of games. He has thereby abandoned his previous point of view, that such a match is a game of roulette.'

6 September – 12 November 1929. Alekhine wins the match against Bogoljubow ahead of schedule – 15½-9½ (+11 -5 =9). Incidentally, this was the first World Championship match in 19 years to be held in Europe.

It is time, however, to interrupt our diary and take an unprejudiced look at the champion's dangerous opponent Efim Dmitrievich Bogoljubow (1889-1952), who was born and grew up in the Ukraine, at the age of 18 entered the Kiev Polytechnic Institute, but soon abandoned his studies for the sake of chess. At the All-Union master tournament of 1913/14 he gained the master title, played in Mannheim and, as I have already described, after the start of the War was interned together with other Russian players in Triberg, where he married and where his wife bore him two daughters.

After the War Bogoljubow quickly progressed into one of the five leading grandmasters in the world, as indicated by his +4 -5 =3 in a match with Rubinstein (Sweden 1920) and also his tournament victories in Pistyan 1922 (ahead of Alekhine), Carlsbad 1923 (together with Alekhine and Maróczy) and especially Moscow 1925 (ahead of Lasker and Capablanca). After returning in 1924 to the USSR, he had time to win two championships of the country, but when the authorities prohibited him from playing in Merano 1926 (in Italy the objectionable Mussolini was in power) he gave up his Soviet citizenship and became a naturalised German. It need hardly be said that the All-Russian chess section, after calling 'citizen Bogoljubow a renegade, who has followed the steps of Alekhine,' excluded him from their ranks and deprived him of his title of USSR champion...

I will give two opinions about Bogoljubow's style. 'The main trait of his character, his alpha and omega, is unbounded optimism. In this respect he is the image of Chigorin, who too was always convinced that he was about to win.' (Spielmann) 'Capablanca pulverises his opponents, Alekhine fights, Lasker thinks, while Bogoljubow fantasises in chess... A whole book could be written about him, but two words are also sufficient: *amazing practician!* Against this intense stream of plans, ideas and combinations even the strongest opponents find it hard to hold out, and the weaker ones almost always die like flies.' (Tartakower)

'Bogoljubow is aggressive and enterprising,' wrote Alekhine before the match. 'In our understanding of the essence of chess we have a certain similarity, but we have very different views both on life, and on the principles of the struggle. He regards his opponent as an excellent experimental field for applying his skill and never tries to study his opponent. He often hopes for a miracle, where what is needed is knowledge... He considers the main aim of the struggle to be his personal satisfaction. But my understanding of the struggle has always been the opposite. For success I consider that three factors are necessary: firstly, an awareness of my own strengths and weaknesses; secondly, an accurate understanding of my opponent's strengths and weaknesses; thirdly, a higher aim than momentary satisfaction. I see this aim as being scientific and artistic achievements, which place the game of chess on a par with other arts.'

The very first game set the tone of the entire match. The champion won with a swift and spectacular attack, but the initial stage was very feebly played by his opponent – 'an outstanding master of the opening'...

Game 131

A.Alekhine-E.Bogoljubow

World Championship Match,
Germany/Holland 1929, 1st game
Slav Defence D16

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 dxc4 5 a4 e6?

'It has been my peculiar luck that this illogical move (instead of the natural 5...♗f5) has been adopted against me, with a disastrous effect, no less than four times, namely (besides the present game) by Bogoljubow again (Nottingham 1936), by Dr Euwe (19th matchgame, 1935) and by the late German master, Helling, in Dresden 1936.' (Alekhine)

6 e4 ♗b4 (Black also fails to equalise by 6...c5 7 e5 ♘d5 8 ♗xc4 ♘c6 9 0-0 cxd4 10 ♘xd4! etc.) **7 e5 ♘d5**

In the three aforementioned games 7...♘e4 8 ♕c2 ♕d5 9 ♗e2 was played, also with advantage to White.

8 ♗d2 ♗xc3

'If instead 8...b5, then 9 ♘e4 ♗e7 10 b3! etc., winning back the pawn with decidedly the better position.' (Alekhine) But, according to Kotov, here it was still possible somehow to hold on: 10...♘d7 11 bxc4 bxc4 12 ♗xc4 ♘7b6 13 ♗e2 (13 ♗b3 ♗a6) 13...a5 14 0-0 ♘b4.

9 bxc3 b5 10 ♘g5!

A powerful attacking manoeuvre: ♘e4-d6+ is threatened and it is dangerous for Black to castle.

10...f6

A serious weakening. If nevertheless 10...0-0?! (10...♘xc3? 11 ♕f3!), then 11 ♕b1! and 12 axb5! No better is 10...h6?! 11 ♘e4 0-0 12 ♕h5 (12 ♘d6!?) 12...f6 (12...f5 13 ♘d6) 13 ♕g6 ♔h8 14 ♘d6 ♕d7 15 h4!, but 10...♕e7 is perhaps more tenacious.

11 exf6! ♘xf6?

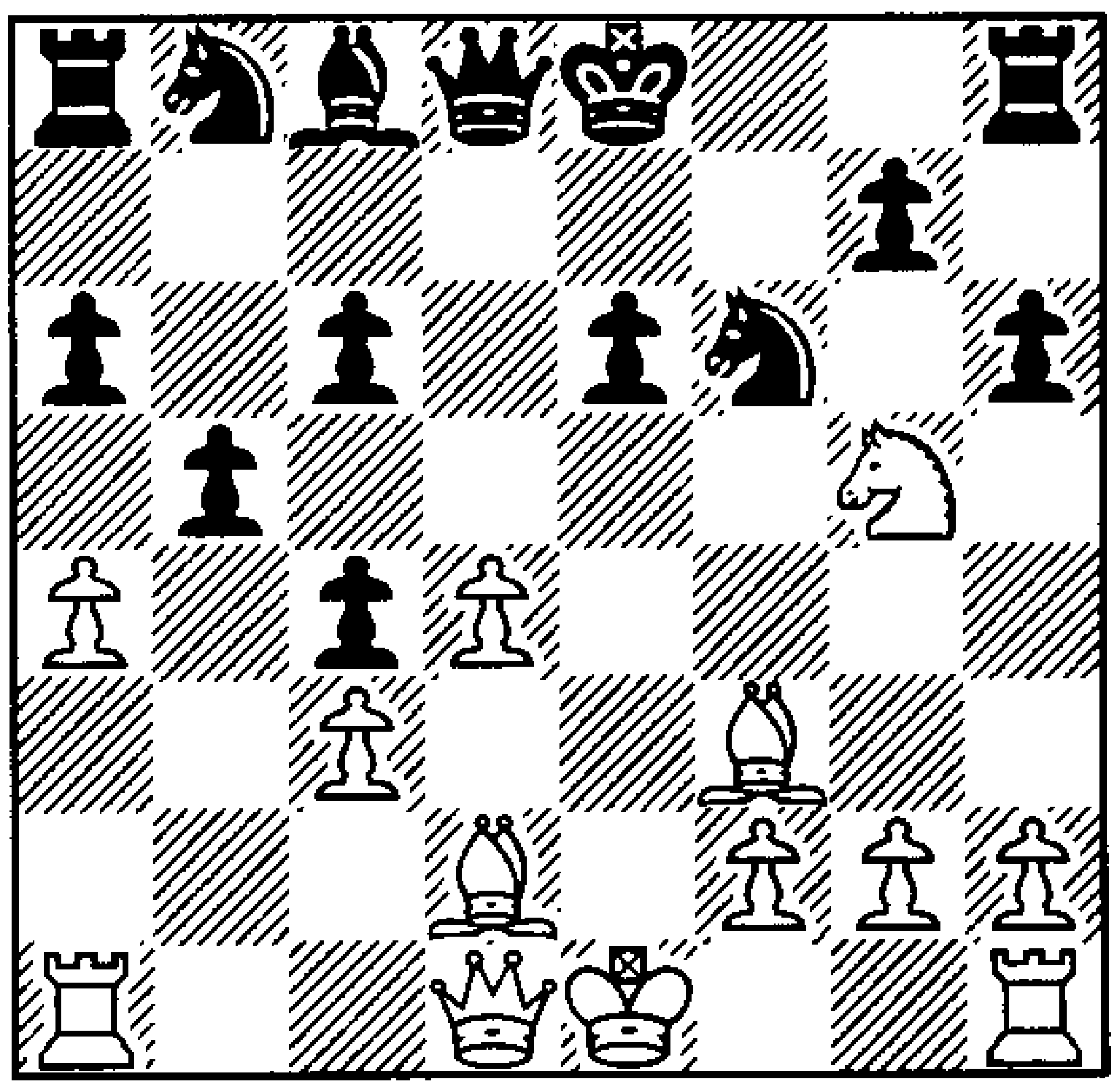
And this is already catastrophic. Essential was 11...gxf6! (but not 11...♕xf6? 12 axb5 cxb5 13 ♘e4 etc.) 12 ♕h5+ ♔d7 13 ♘e4 ♕e8 14 ♕h4 ♕g6 with an inferior, but defensible position (Bolbochan-Letelier, Mar del Plata 1952).

12 ♗e2 a6

'12...0-0 13 axb5 h6 (13...cxb5 14 ♗f3 ♘d5 15 ♕b1) 14 b6! ♕xb6 (14...hxg5 15 ♖xa7!) 15 ♘f3 ♗a6 16 ♘e5 would prove positionally hopeless in the long run.' (Alekhine)

13 ♗f3! (threatening 14 axb5) **13...h6**

If 13...♘d5 Alekhine gives 14 ♕b1 g6 15 ♘xh7 ♖xh7 16 ♕xg6+ ♖f7 17 ♗h5 and 18 ♕g8+, and if 13...♖a7 – 14 ♗f4 ♖b7 (*14...♕b6 15 ♗d6 – G. K.*) 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♖a8 with a winning attack'. For example: 16...♗d7 17 ♗d6 ♕c8 18 ♗h5+ g6 19 ♕f3 ♘d5 20 ♕f7+ ♔d8 21 ♗f3 ♖e8 22 ♕f6+ ♘xf6 23 ♘f7 mate.



14 ♗h5+ ♘xh5 (14...♔e7 15 ♘f7 ♕e8 16 ♘xh8 ♘xh5 17 ♕g4 wins) **15 ♕xh5+ ♔d7 16 ♘f7 ♕e8 17 ♕g6! ♖g8 18 ♗f4**

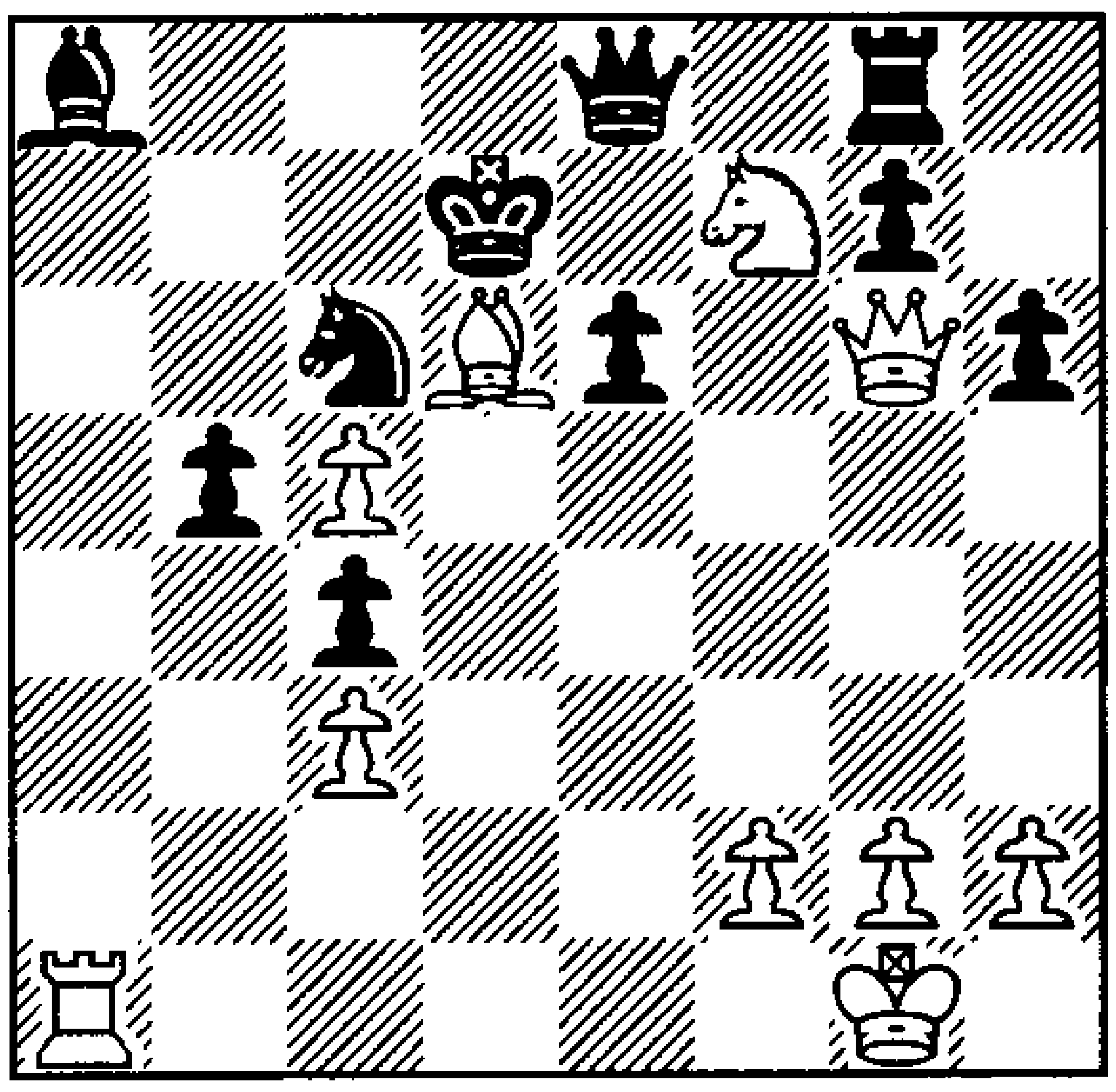
At this moment – an unprecedented occurrence! – Alekhine was stung by a wasp. Which, however, did not help Black...

18...♗b7 (if 18...♖f8, then 19 ♘e5+ ♔d8 20 ♕e4) **19 ♗g3 ♔e7 20 ♗d6+**

'A bit of cat-and-mouse play.' (Alekhine) Precisely!

20...♔d7 21 0-0 c5 (desperation) **22 dxc5 ♗d5** (22...♘c6 23 ♖fd1) **23 axb5 axb5 24 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 25 ♖a1 ♘c6**

Or 25...♗b7 26 ♖a7 ♔c8 27 ♗g3 winning.



26 ♘e5+! 1-0

26...♘xe5 (26...♔c8 27 ♖xa8+) 27 ♖a7+

♔c6 28 ♕e4 mate! In all sincerity, Capablanca would not have succumbed in such fashion...

True, after two tenacious and lengthy draws, Bogoljubow managed to level the scores in the fourth game. But in the fifth he again lost – and this time, in a classic, textbook endgame, with the same bishop, shut out of play, as in his game with Capablanca (*Game No.99*).

Nowadays everyone knows what is meant by a shut-in bishop, but then the methods of punishment were only beginning to be discovered – exchanges and the transition into an ending, where the 'extra' piece can be exploited. Alekhine very subtly sensed this entire conception, although he committed an inaccuracy in the conversion of his advantage.

Game 132

A.Alekhine-E.Bogoljubow

World Championship Match,
Germany/Holland 1929, 5th game
Slav Defence D17

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 dxc4 5 a4 ♗f5 (instead of 5...e6? – *Game No.131*) **6 ♘e5!?**

An aggressive sortie, known from the time of the game Nimzowitsch-Sämisch (Marienbad 1925). 6 e3 is quieter.

6...e6

Already known then was the plan, which is still of current interest, with 6...♘bd7 7 ♘xc4 ♕c7 and ...e7-e5 (Capablanca-Vidmar, Carlsbad 1929), which was later tested in the Alekhine-Euwe matches. We will return to it again in the second volume.

7 ♗g5

The third game went 7 f3 c5 8 dxc5 (more is promised by 8 e4!?) 8...♕xd1+ 9 ♔xd1 ♗xc5 10 e4 ♗g6 11 ♗xc4 ♘c6! 12 ♘xc6 bxc6 13 ♗f4, and here Black could have equalised by 13...♘d7! with the idea of ...e6-e5 and ...f7-f6 (and if 14 e5, then 14...♘b6 and ...♘d5).

After 7 f3, 7...♗b4 is also played, for example: 8 ♗g5 h6! 9 ♗xf6 (9 ♗h4 c5 10 dxc5 ♕xd1+ 11 ♔xd1 ♘bd7 etc.) 9...gxf6 10 ♘xc4 c5 11 dxc5 ♕xd1+ 12 ♖xd1 ♗c2 13 ♖c1 ♗b3 14 ♘d2 ♗xc3 15 ♖xc3 ♗xa4 16 e4 ♔e7 equalising (Euwe-Alekhine, Holland 11th matchgame 1937), while in recent times the sharp variation 8 e4 ♗xe4 9 fxe4 ♘xe4 10 ♗d2 ♕xd4 11 ♘xe4 ♕xe4+ 12 ♕e2 ♗xd2+ 13 ♔xd2 ♕d5+ has been exhaustively analysed.

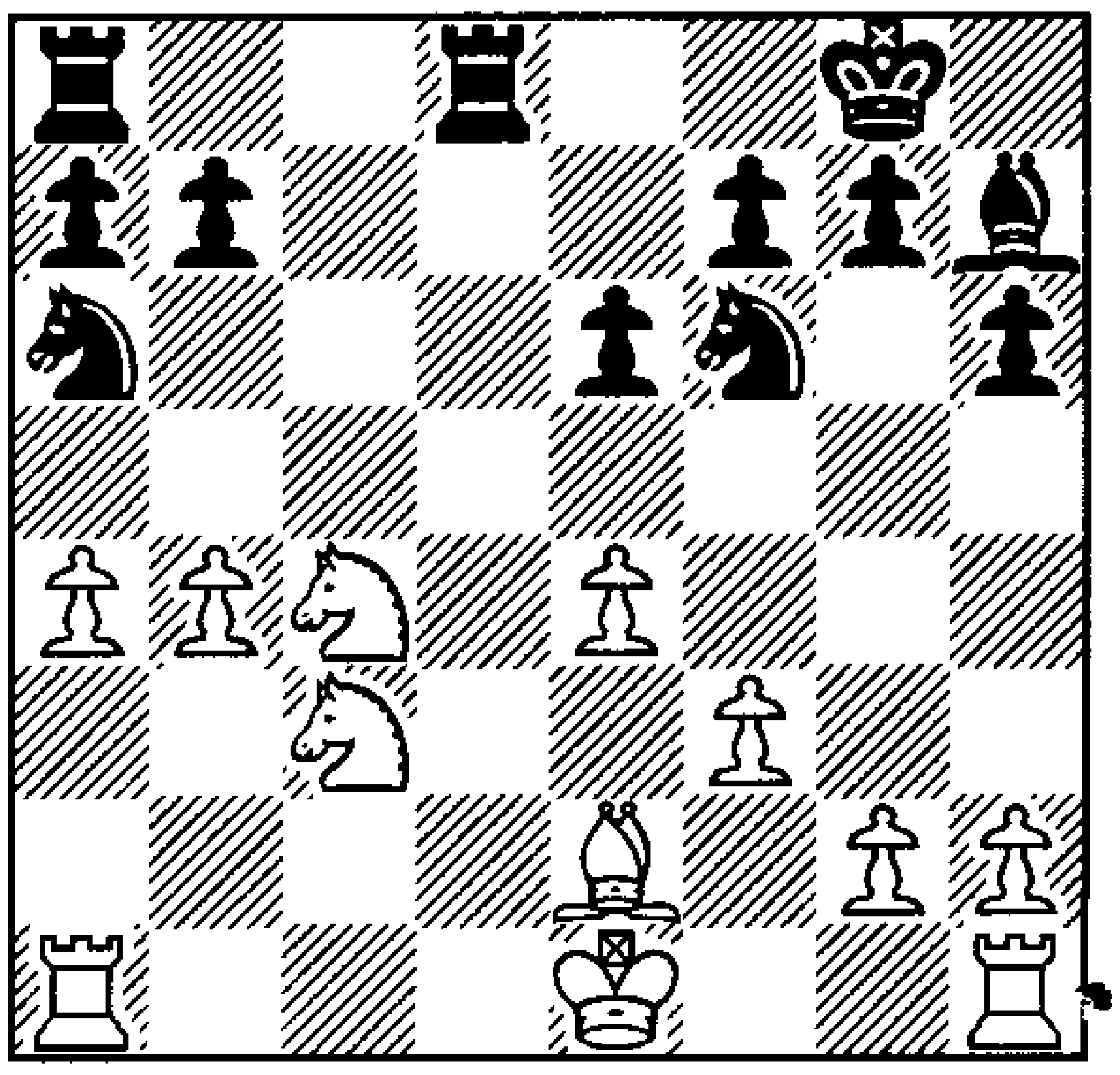
7...♗e7?!

Of course, more active is 7...♗b4 8 ♘xc4 (8 f3 h6!, as in the previous paragraph) 8...♕d5 9 ♗xf6 (9 ♕b3!? ♘a6 10 0-0-0) 9...♕xc4 (9...gxf6!?) 10 ♕d2 gxf6 11 e4 ♕b3 12 exf5 ♘d7 13 fxe6 fxe6 14 ♗e2 0-0-0 equalising (Alekhine-Euwe, Holland 2nd matchgame 1937).

8 f3 h6 9 e4! (a surprise!) **9...♗h7**

Unsuitable is 9...hxg5? 10 exf5 exf5 11 ♗xc4 0-0 12 h4! (or immediately 12 ♕b3, and if 12...♕xd4, then 13 ♗xf7+ ♔h7 14 ♕e6 ♕e3+ 15 ♔f1) 12...gxh4 13 ♕b3 etc.

10 ♗e3 ♘bd7 11 ♘xc4 0-0 12 ♗e2 c5 13 dxc5 ♗xc5 14 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 15 b4! ♘a6 (15...♕xd1+ 16 ♖xd1 ♘xa4 17 ♘xa4 b5 18 ♘cb6 axb6 19 ♗xb5 also favours White) **16 ♕xd8 ♖fxd8**



17 ♘a2!

'The only way to keep the positional advantage, as 17 b5 would concede the important square c5, and 17 ♖b1 would have permitted a promising counterattack starting by 17...♘d5!' (Alekhine) And now 18 ♘a5 ♖b8 19 ♘xb7 is threatened. White is effectively a piece up, since the bishop at h7 is out of play. Alas, Bogoljubow again succumbs due to a badly-played opening.

17...♘b8! (provoking 18 b5 by the threat of ...♘c6-d4, but...) **18 ♔f2!**

The champion realises that even control of the d4-square will not ease Black's lot.

15...♘c6 19 ♖hd1 ♘d4

According to Alekhine, 19...♖xd1?! 20 ♖xd1 ♖d8 was even worse because of 21 b5 ♖xd1 22 ♗xd1 ♘d8 23 ♘d6!, and I agree with him: 23...♘d7 24 ♘b4 ♘c5 25 a5 e5 26 a6 bxa6 27 bxa6 ♔f8 28 ♘b5 f5 29 exf5 ♗xf5 30 ♘xa7 ♗d7 31 ♗e2 and wins.

20 ♖ac1 ♔f8 (with the obscure prospect of ...♘e8, ...f7-f6, ...e6-e5 and ...♗g8) **21 ♗f1 ♘e8?!**

Too static. Bogoljubow obviously does not sense the danger and does not fully understand what is happening on the board. In my opinion, the best chance was 21...♘b3! 22 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 23 ♖c3 ♘d2, trying to interfere with the opponent's plans.

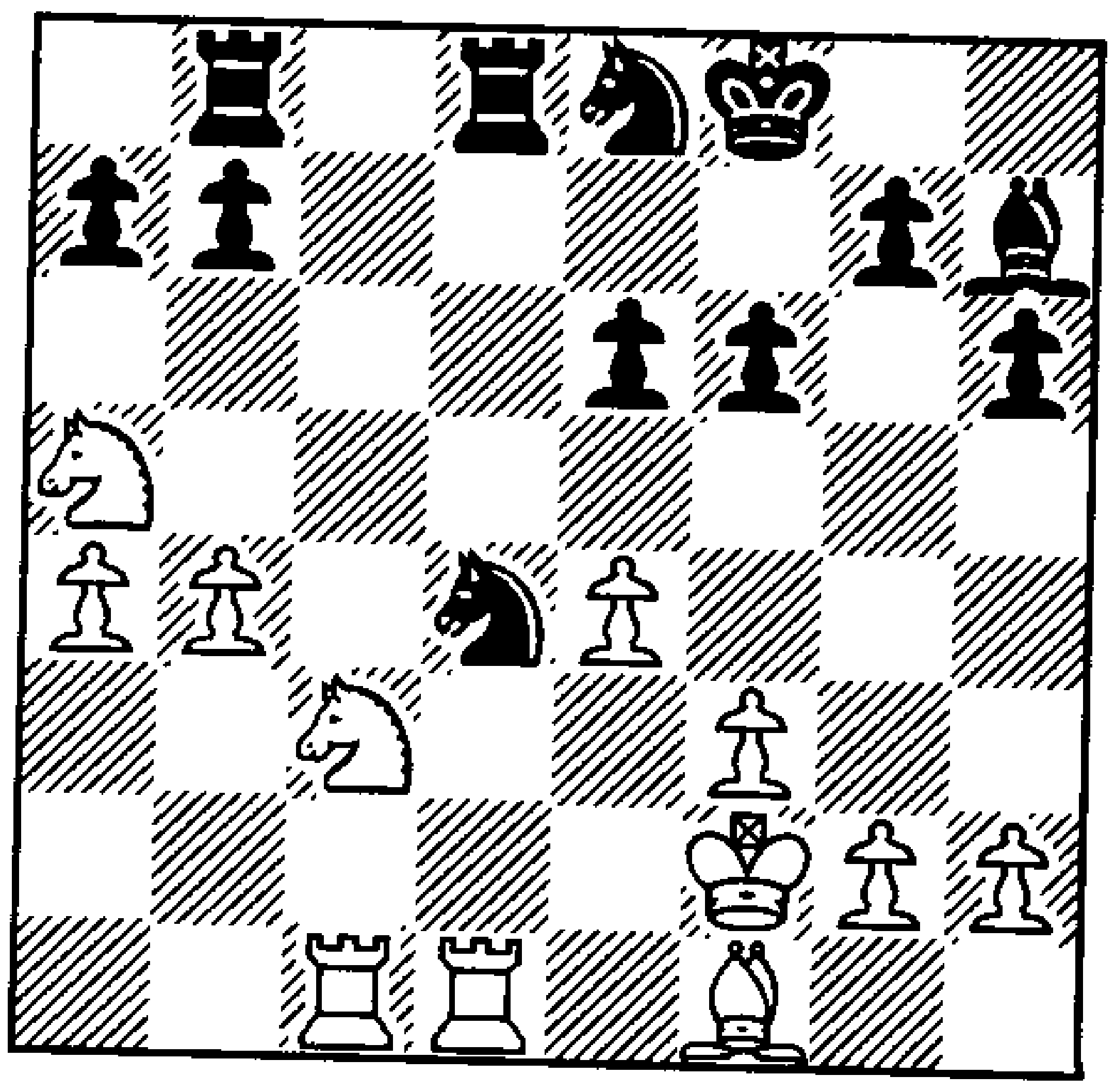
22 ♘c3?!

'The immediate 22 ♘a5!, leaving the c-file free for the white rooks, was stronger: 22...b6 23 ♘b7 ♖d7 24 ♗b5! ♖xb7 25 ♖xd4 ♖c7 26 ♖xc7 ♘xc7 27 ♗c6 ♖c8 28 ♖d7 with the threat of ♗b7, or 22...♖ab8 23 ♘c3 b6 24 ♖xd4! ♖xd4 25 ♘c6 ♖bd8 26 ♔e3 ♖4d6 27 ♘xd8 ♖xd8 28 ♘b5! ♖d7 29 ♖c8 and ♖a8 winning.' (Sozin) Here it is seen especially clearly what it is like for Black to play without his bishop.

22...f6 23 ♘a5 ♖ab8?

An oversight in an unpleasant position. 23...b6! was essential – according to Alekhine, after 24 ♘b7 ♖d7 25 ♗b5 ♖xb7 26 ♖xd4 ♖c7 27 ♘e2 ♖xc1 28 ♘xc1 ♖c8 29 ♘d3 Black can fight for a draw. Sozin goes further: '29...e5 30 ♖d7 ♖c7 31 ♖d8 ♗g6 (*the bishop has broken free! – G. K.*) 32 ♖a8 ♔e7 33 ♗xe8 ♗xe8 34 b5! then ♘b4 and ♘d5 (or ♘c6) with an obvious advantage to White.' However, after 34...♗f7 35 ♘b4 ♔d6 the position is equal.

But now the outcome is decided by a fine combination.



24 ♘b5! ♘xb5 25 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 26 ♘xb7!

This intermediate move is the whole point. A worthy completion of White's long-term strategic plan!

26...♖b8

Totally bad was 26...♖d7 27 ♘c5 or 26...♖d2+ 27 ♔e3 ♘bd6 (27...♖b2 28 ♗xb5) 28 ♔xd2 ♘xb7 29 ♖c8 and ♖a8, picking up the a7-pawn and queening one of his pawns.

27 ♘c5! (threatening both axb5 and the fork ♘d7+) **27...♔e7 28 axb5!**

'A concrete approach to the position: the weakening of the black a7-pawn is more important than the doubling of White's own pawns.' (Kotov)

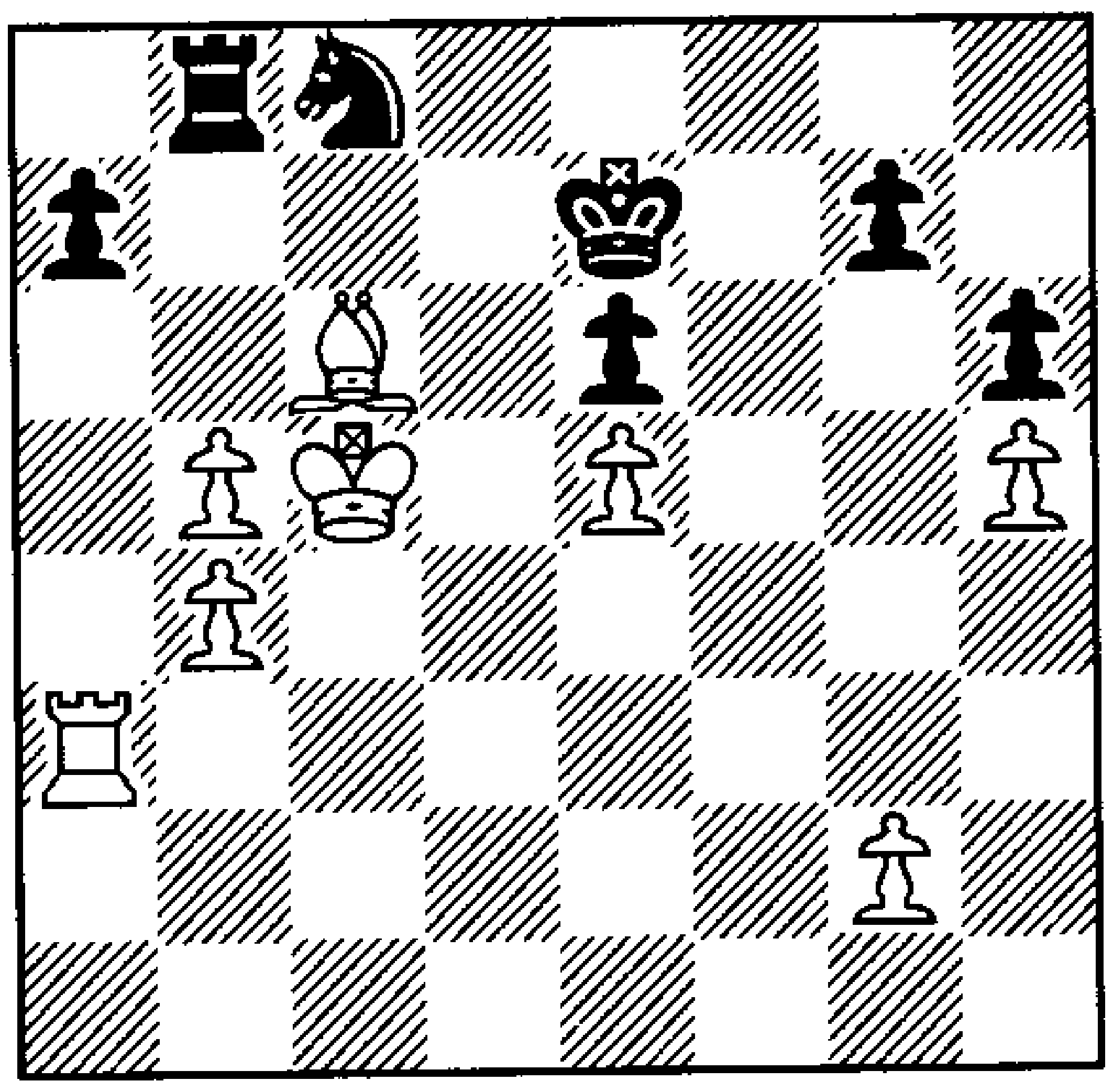
28...♘d6 29 ♖a1 ♘c8 30 ♗c4 ♗g8

But not 30...e5 31 ♗e6 winning. The black bishop shows signs of life, but it is too late: White is a pawn up, which he accurately converts.

31 f4 ♗f7 32 e5 fxe5 33 fxe5 ♖b6 34 ♔e3 ♗e8 35 ♖a5 ♗d7 36 ♔d4 ♗e8 37 h4 ♗d7 38 ♗e2 ♖b8 (38...♗e8 39 ♗f3!) **39 ♘xd7 ♔xd7 40 ♗f3!**

But not 40 ♔c5?! because of 40...♖b7! and ...♖c7+.

40...♖b6 41 ♔c5 (threatening ♖xa7+) **41...♖b8 42 h5 ♔d8 43 ♗c6 ♔e7 44 ♖a3**



44...♔f7

'Black is totally stalemated. After 44...♔d8 (44...♖b6 45 ♖xa7+) White wins by the elegant manoeuvre 45 ♖d3+ *(45 ♖g3! – G. K.)* 45...♔e7 46 ♖d7+ ♔f8 47 ♖d8+ ♔e7 48 ♖h8 ♔f7 49 ♗d7 ♘b6 50 ♖xb8 ♘xd7+ 51 ♔d6 ♘xb8 52 ♔c7.' (Sozin)

45 ♗e4 ♔e7 46 ♔c6! ♔d8 47 ♖d3+ ♔e7 48 ♔c7 1-0

Apart from the slip on the 23rd move, an excellent win by Alekhine, illustrating the difference in class of the two players.

To be fair, it should be said that this match was no easy stroll for the champion. Bogoljubow again drew level in the sixth game (2-2!), and he had the advantage in the seventh, which his opponent played too riskily, but he lost with a vexing blunder on the 20th move.

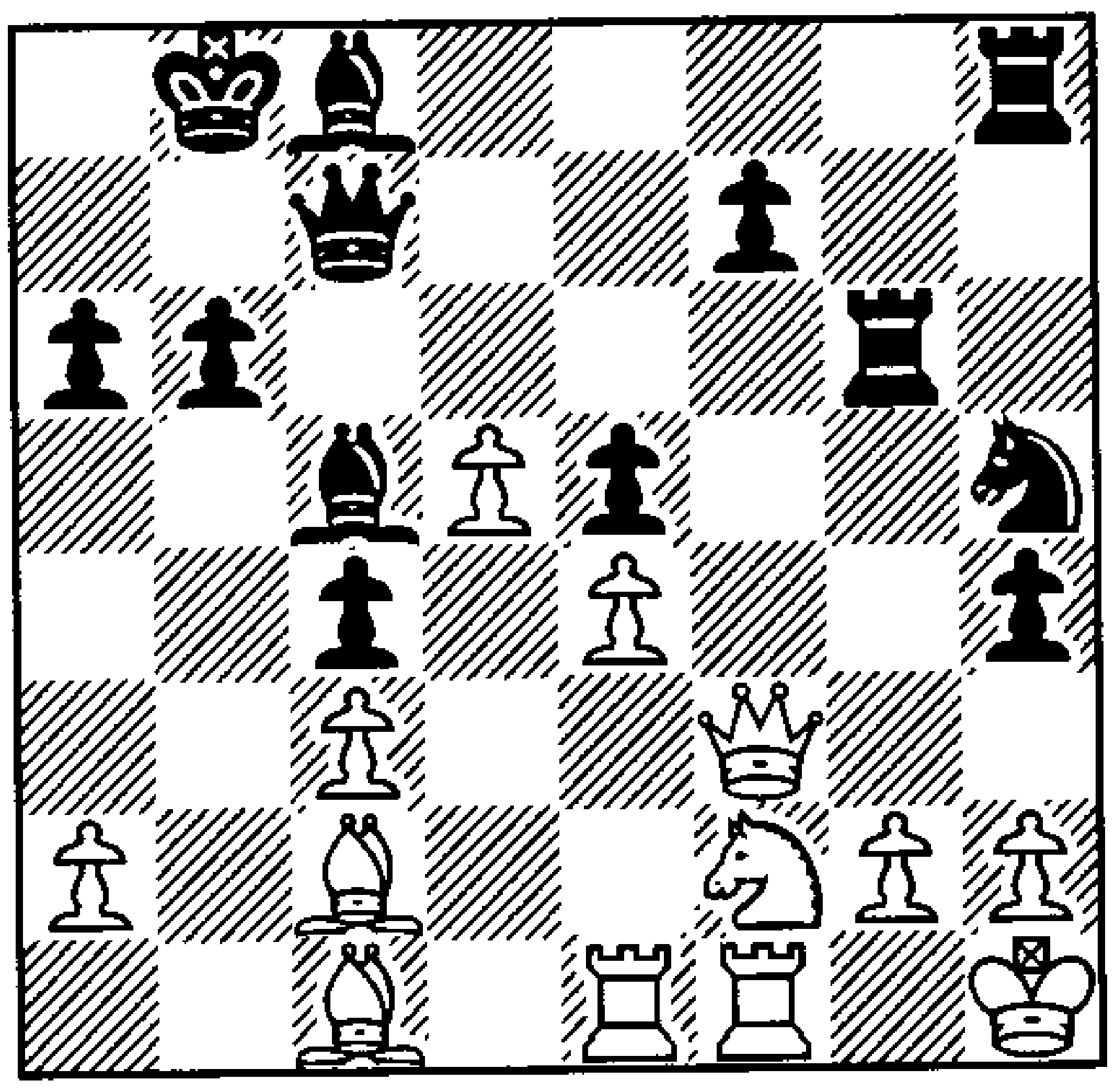
Let us look at the battle between the Russian stars through the eyes of the German master Adolf Kramer. 'Alekhine and Bogoljubow are close friends and are well familiar with each other's strong and weak sides. Bogoljubow is optimistic and sanguine. Like a massive boat he sits immobile at the board, whereas the nervy Alekhine is all the time drumming on the table with his fingers or restlessly moving his legs.' Alekhine was irritated by the sounds of music that were carrying from somewhere, and at his demand play was transferred to another room. 'Alekhine's wish is the law!... With large, springy strides, silently, with sparkling eyes the world champion rushes among the crowd of spectators... The corpulent Bogoljubow gets up much more rarely from his chair. His good nature does not allow him to ignore the questions of the spectators, and he hurries to hide from them in the room for journalists. On his face there is always a friendly smile...'

How distant it still was then from the stern era of professional chess! Although crushing defeats, such as the one that occurred in the eighth game, also happen in present-day matches.

Game 133

E.Bogoljubow-A.Alekhine

Match, Germany/Holland 1929, 8th game



26...♘g3+! 27 hxg3 (27 ♔g1 ♗g4!) **27...hxg3+ 28 ♘h3**

Or 28 ♔g1 gxf2+ 29 ♖xf2 ♗g4 30 ♕g3 ♗e2 etc.

28...♗xh3 29 gxh3 ♖xh3+ 0-1

In view of 30 ♔g2 ♖h2 mate.

After eight games, with the score standing at 5-3 in the champion's favour, a previously envisaged two-week break(!) was announced, and Alekhine... in his capacity as the French delegate travelled to Venice for the 6th FIDE Congress. And he returned not to Wiesbaden, but to Heidelberg, where the next three games were played. (Both previously, and later, matches for the world championship were sometimes held in several cities or even in different countries. This was very tiring for the players, but what could be done if there was no other way of raising the necessary funds?)

After a couple of draws, Alekhine won the 10th game and then also the 12th – now in Berlin (where, incidentally, the chairman of the match jury was Lasker himself!). Thus the score in wins became 6-2, and had the London rules been in operation, it would not have been necessary to travel to Holland. However, by the new rules the score was 8-4, and a further 7½ points had to be gained. A whole eternity! Bogoljubow had no intention of surrendering: to the applause of the audience he won the 13th and 14th games, while in the 15th he gained a positional advantage, drove his opponent into severe time-trouble and... the champion nevertheless escaped with a draw.

Here is another interesting sketch from the match, this time by the master A. Seitz: 'Alekhine is extremely nervous, even more so than usual. Already in the opening he spends a great deal of time, almost always ends up in extreme time-trouble and then constantly looks at the clock, fixing his sparkling eyes on the dial. When his opponent is thinking, he sometimes walks around the hall with long steps, and sometimes stops in front of the demonstration board and looks at it attentively, as though hoping to notice something new... Alekhine gave up smoking a long time ago (and therefore he feels much better), but Bogoljubow constantly smokes thick "Havanas" or cheap Swiss cigars.'

At the crucial moment the champion was able to gain a grip on the match and confidently move towards victory, by winning a further five games – two in Berlin and three in Holland. At the end the circle was closed: the last two drawn games, the 24th and 25th, were again played in Wiesbaden.

Of course, in this duel between two striking, but *unequal* opponents there were far more mistakes and omissions than in Buenos Aires. However, Nikolai Grigoriev was right when he said: 'The match vividly demonstrated how great can be a person's creative inventiveness in chess, and what an inexhaustible wealth of combinative possibilities it contains – and it put a stop to the unnecessary and harmful stories about the drawing death of chess.'

In an interview after the match Bogoljubow stated: 'No one now has any chances of defeating Alekhine in a match. Nimzowitsch has none at all. And I wouldn't advise Capablanca to play a return match, since after this new encounter his halo will completely fade. True, I think that Capablanca is stronger than many others...' To a question of whether Alekhine could calmly rest on his laurels, Bogoljubow replied: 'Capablanca tried to rest on his laurels. But Alekhine will defeat everyone who he meets. During the next four to five years I will follow his victories, and then we will play again. I do not agree to consider myself completely defeated after this first loss.'

But what was Capablanca doing during this match? He played successfully in two unimportant tournaments – in Budapest and then in Barcelona... Let us return to our diary.

1 October 1929. On the eve of the ninth game the following letter was sent from Barcelona to Heidelberg: 'Capablanca – to Alekhine. Dear Sir! I confirm my previous challenge to a match for the world championship. In accordance with the London rules of 1922 I have transferred a deposit of $500 to Dr Lederer.'

28 November 1929. Alekhine sends a reply from Paris to Capablanca, confirming the receipt of the challenge... On 14 November in Wiesbaden (i.e. immediately after the match with Bogoljubow: obviously, before the end of it the champion did not have the right to consider any new challenges): 'I accept your challenge and set the start of the match between 15 October and 15 December 1930.'

3 December 1929. Capablanca replies instantly to Alekhine: 'I am sending a copy of your letter in order to find out from Dr Lederer if the arrangements can be carried out on the days you mention. As soon as I have an answer about it, from Dr Lederer, I shall, I hope, be able to give you a definite answer as to a place for the match, etc.'

December 1929. Reports appear in the press that it is planned to stage the return match in the small American resort of Bradley Beach or in Mexico. Alekhine makes an announcement that until the end of 1930 he will consider himself morally obliged to play Capablanca, but if the latter does not find the required funds, then he, Alekhine, will be able to accept other challenges.

January 1930. Capablanca wins the tournament in Hastings, but the press reports that his match with Alekhine is being deferred due to financial difficulties. Indeed: the crash on the New York stock exchange, the world economic crisis... This means, he was out of luck.

1 June 1930. Capablanca sends a letter to Alekhine with a request to defer the start of the match to the winter (1930/31) and Alekhine agrees to grant a postponement to 14 February 1931.

June-July 1930. In reply Capablanca states that he made a slip of the pen and he requests a postponement to the winter of 1931/32. At the same time he accuses Alekhine of greatly dragging out the question of the return match. After this there follows an exchange of attacks and reproaches.

13-27 July 1930. Alekhine plays for the French team in the Olympiad in Hamburg and scores 9 out of 9 (incidentally, the Poles won there with Rubinstein on top board – 15 out of 17, Akiba's swansong!). Capablanca is present at the Olympiad as a spectator. He attentively follows the play, but does everything possible to avoid Alekhine...

'The two great players became enemies and never again spoke to each other,' is how things were summed up by grandmaster Yuri Averbakh, who absorbingly described this story in an article in *Shakhmaty v SSSR* (1989 No.11) and in his book *V poiskakh istiny* (In Search of the Truth) (1992).

Let us see what the ranking order in the world chess arena was at the start of 1930. In the absence of ratings, a more or less reliable picture is given by the result of a poll, conducted by the French sports magazine *Loto* among chess journalists in Europe and America (a prototype of the 'Chess Oscar'!): 1. Alekhine – 870 points; 2. Capablanca – 809; 3. Lasker – 729; 4. Nimzowitsch – 686.5; 5. Bogoljubow – 651.6; 6. Spielmann – 424.7; 7. Rubinstein – 385.8; 8. Vidmar – 378.9; 9. Euwe – 370.1; 10. Tartakower – 297.

What is striking is the large gap between the top five and the next five. In view of the fact that Capa and Nimzowitsch did not have the funds for a match for the crown, Lasker now hardly ever played, Rubinstein had finished his career and Euwe had not yet developed, the only 'real' challenger remained the indefatigable Bogoljubow. Even despite a decline in his results and his loss in a match against Spielmann by 4-5 (Semmering 1932). In the spring of 1934 Bogoljubow raised the necessary minimum prize fund in Germany, and his prediction of a second match with Alekhine was realised. An amusing detail: on the challenger's insistence this was called a 'revenge match' – such a thing would not have occurred to Chigorin in 1892 or to Spassky in 1969...

During the intervening four years Alekhine had gained a series of brilliant tournament victories (which will be described later) and under their influence his style had become even more risky and reckless. He had acquired the dangerous feeling that anything was permitted: it was said that he was a daredevil, who could confuse anyone he wanted and who could win any position! And his second match with Bogoljubow, outwardly more successful than the first (the challenger was no longer the same player) is noteworthy in this respect.

The conditions were the same as those previously: the best of 30 games, and the winner to win at least six games. Alekhine again won ahead of schedule: 15½-10½ (+8 -3 =15). He moved towards his goal like Arnold Schwarzenegger in *The Terminator*, sweeping away everything in his path, but from time to time his 'computer system' malfunctioned and went awry... I will give only a couple of examples.

After beginning the match quite well – draw, win, draw, the champion suddenly played shockingly in the opening of the fourth game. He wanted to avoid the 'Meran', then still a new, little-studied system, devised by Rubinstein in the 1920s.

Game 134
A.Alekhine-E.Bogoljubow
World Championship Match,
Germany 1934, 4th game
Slav Defence D31

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3

In both matches Alekhine also tried 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 e3 e6 5 ♗d3 ♘bd7 6 ♘bd2, but without particular success.

3...♘f6 4 e3 e6 5 ♗d3 ♘bd7 6 f4?!

An artificial move in the hope of setting up a bind. The normal 6 ♘f3 would have repeated the second game, which went 6...dxc4 7 ♗xc4 b5 8 ♗d3 a6 9 0-0 (9 e4) 9...c5 10 a4!? b4 11 ♘e4 ♗b7 12 ♘ed2 ♗e7 13 a5 0-0 14 ♘c4 ♕c7 15 ♕e2 ♘g4 (15...cxd4! Lasker) 16 e4! cxd4 17 h3 ♘ge5?! (17...♘gf6) 18 ♘fxe5 ♘xe5 19 ♗f4! ♗d6 20 ♗xe5! ♗xe5 21 ♘b6! ♖a7?! 22 ♖ac1 ♕d6 23 ♖c4 f5? 24 exf5 exf5 25 ♖e1! and White won.

6...dxc4! (of course, not 6...♗d6? 7 c5 ♗c7 8 b4) **7 ♗xc4 b5 8 ♗d3 ♗b7 9 ♘f3**

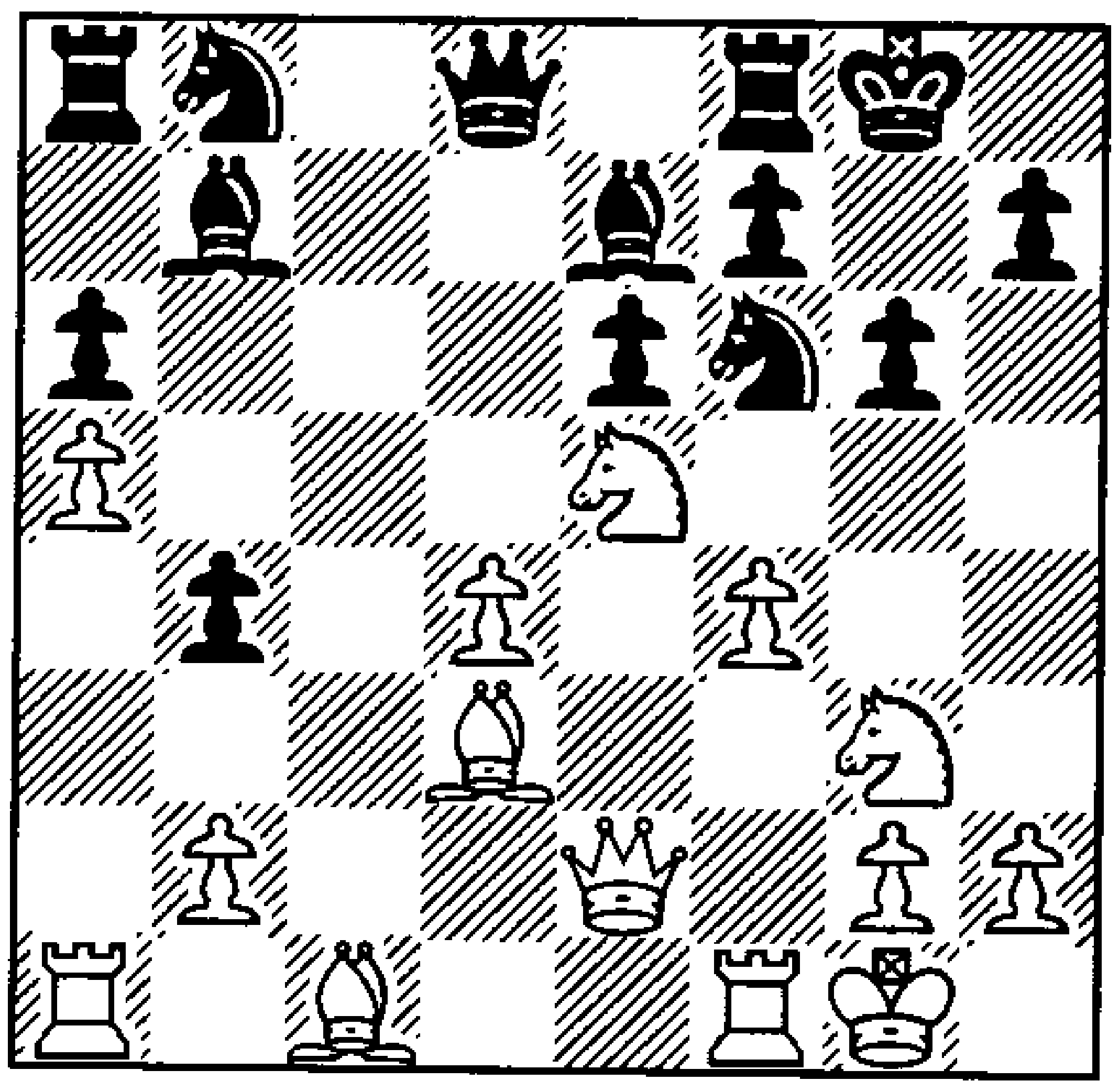
A 'Meran' has been reached with the unnecessary weakening move f2-f4. 9 e4? b4 10 ♘ce2 c5! would be altogether tedious.

9...a6 10 a4 (the immediate 10 0-0 c5 11 f5 was more logical) **10...b4 11 ♘e2** (or 11 ♘e4 c5!) **11...c5! 12 0-0 ♗e7** (12...g6!? and ...♗g7) **13 a5?!**

Again a dubious move. 13 f5 exf5 14 ♗xf5 0-0 15 ♘g3 would have led to complicated play.

13...0-0 14 ♘g3 g6 15 ♕e2 cxd4 16 exd4 (16 ♘xd4 ♘c5 17 ♗c4 ♘fe4 is also unattractive) **16...♘b8! 17 ♘e5!?**

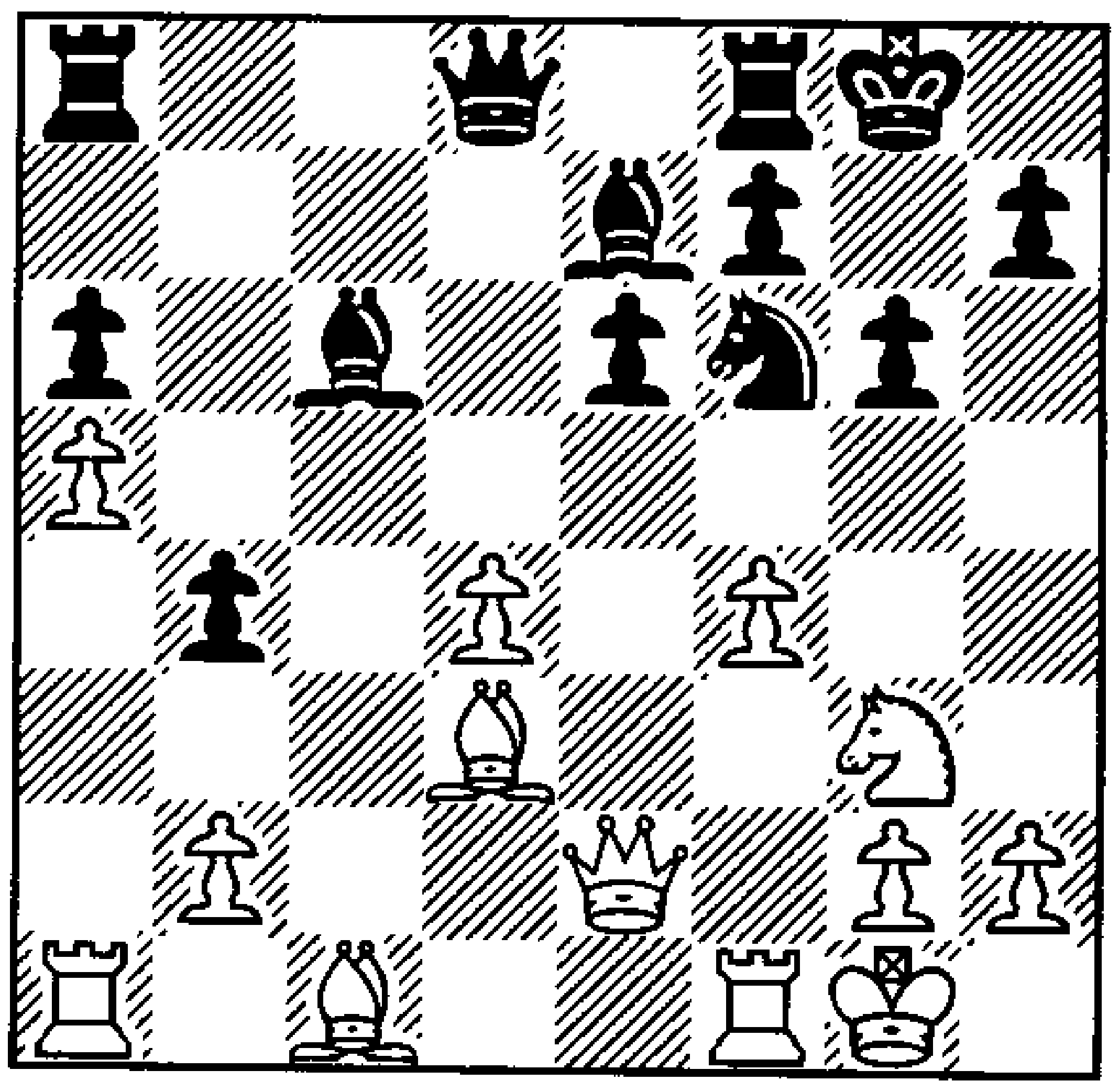
Desperation: if 17 f5, then 17...♗xf3! 18 ♕xf3 ♕xd4+ 19 ♔h1 ♘bd7 and ...♘e5.



17...♘c6

Black could have considered the fearless 17...♕xd4+!? 18 ♗e3 ♕d8 (18...♕d6 19 ♘c4!?) 19 ♖fd1 ♘d5 with hopes of converting his material advantage.

18 ♘xc6 ♗xc6

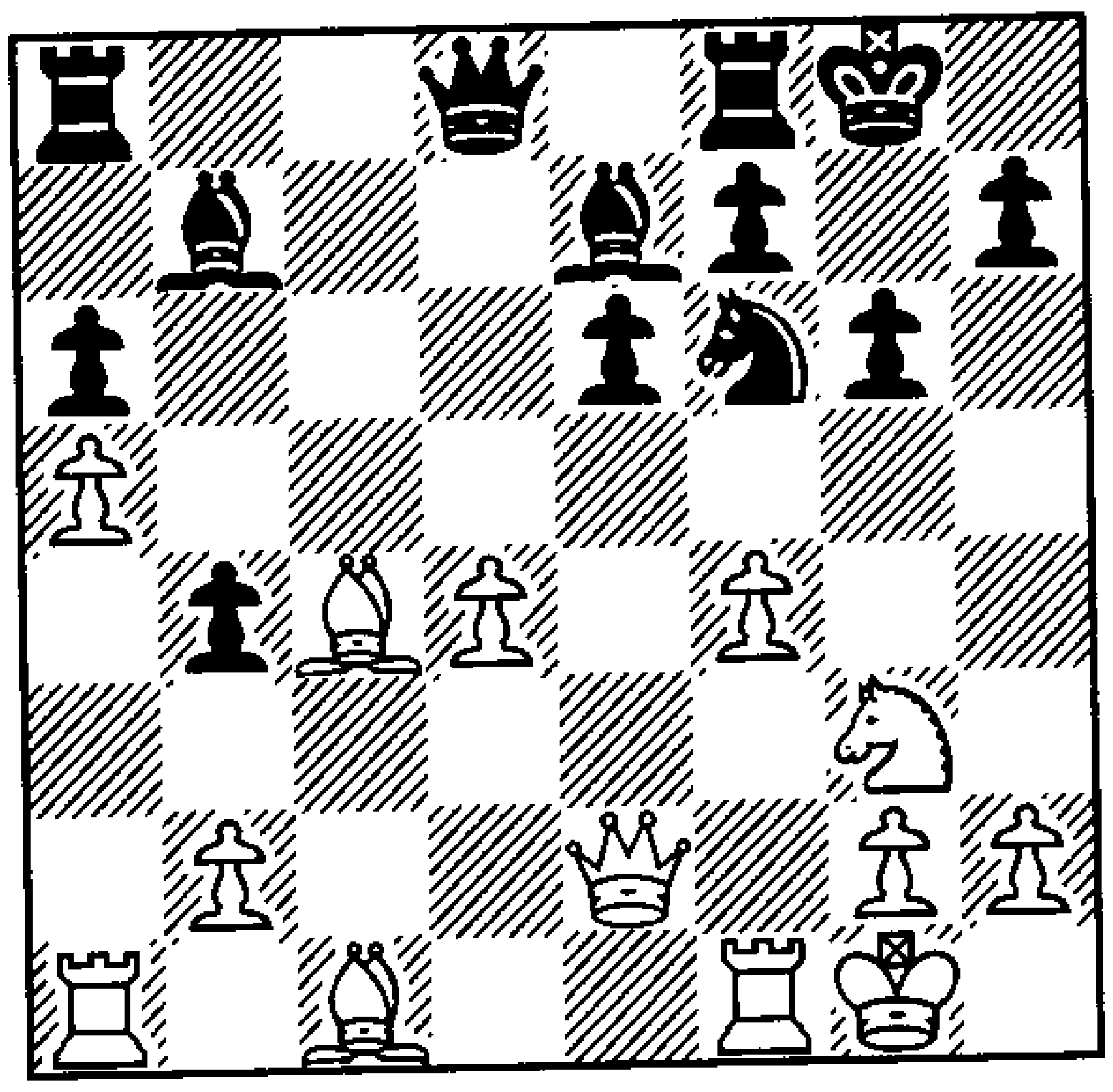


19 ♗c4?

Essential was 19 ♗xa6 ♘g4! (19...♖xa6 20 ♕xa6 ♕xd4+ 21 ♔h1 ♕d5 22 ♕e2 ♗b5 23 ♕f3 ♗xf1 24 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 25 ♘xf1 ♗c5 is level) 20 ♕xg4 (20 ♖d1 ♗f6! with the initiative) 20...♕xd4+ (20...♖xa6 21 f5! Alekhine) 21 ♔h1 ♖xa6 22 ♕e2 ♕a7 23 ♗e3 ♕b7 24 ♗b6 ♗d8 and Black's advantage is comparatively slight.

19...♗b7

Now White has a difficult, strategically almost hopeless position. It is another matter that Alekhine begins somehow to defend himself and to wriggle, Bogoljubow is unable to find a forced win, and time-trouble interferes.

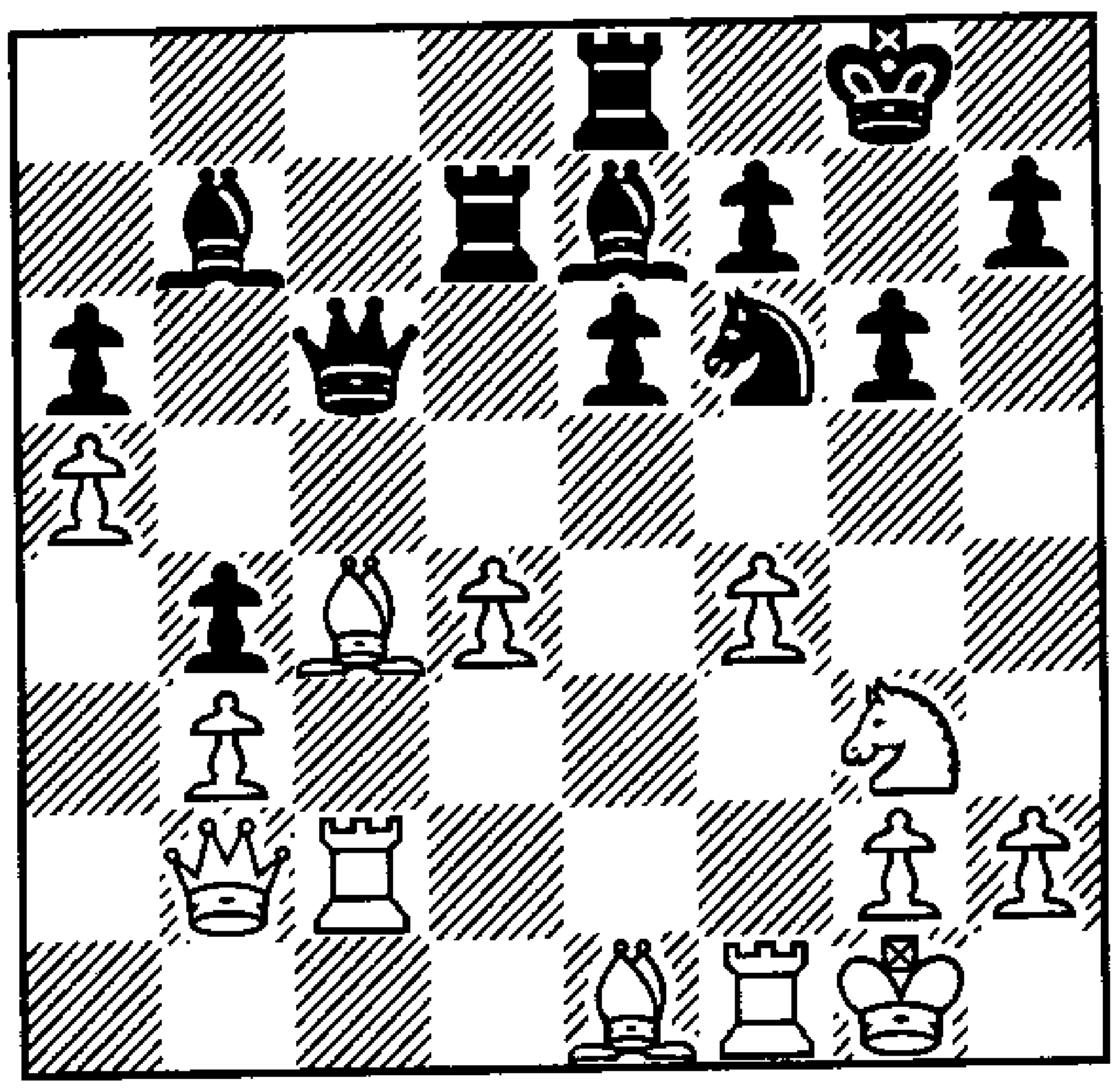


20 ♗e3 ♕d6 (20...♘d5!?) **21 ♖ad1 ♖fe8 22 b3 ♗f8** (22...♗d8!?) **23 ♖d3 ♕c7!? 24 ♕a2 ♗d6 25 ♗d2**

After 25 f5 a good reply is 25...♗xg3! 26 fxe6 ♗xh2+ 27 ♔h1 fxe6 28 ♖xf6 ♗d5 etc.

25...♕c6! 26 ♗e1 ♖ad8 27 ♖d2 ♗e7 (27...♗b8!? intending ...♗a7) **28 ♕b2 ♖d7 29 ♖c2?**

A time-trouble error in a difficult position.



29...♕d6?

Returning the compliment. After 29...♘g4! (but not 29...♖xd4 30 ♗xa6!) Black would have won after any reply: 30 ♖e2 ♗f6; 30 ♕c1 ♖xd4; 30 d5 ♗c5+ 31 ♔h1 exd5; 30 ♗d3 ♕d6 31 ♖c4 ♘e3 32 ♗xb4 ♘xc4; 30 ♖f3 ♗f6 31 ♖d2 (31 ♖d3 or 31 ♗d3 – 31...♕d6) 31...♕c7; or 30 f5 ♘e3 31 fxe6 fxe6 32 ♖e2 ♘xc4.

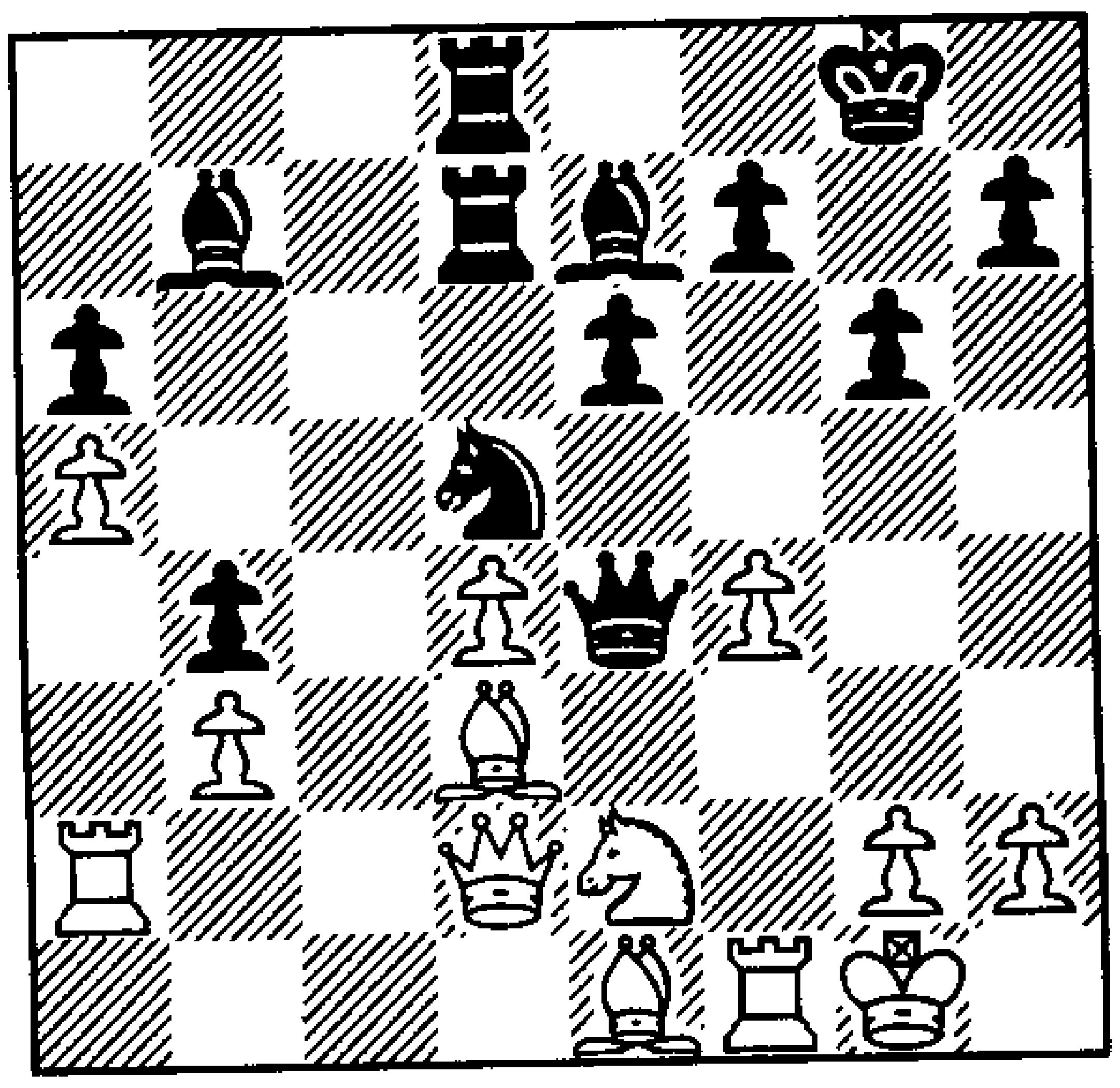
30 ♘e2 ♘d5 (30...♕c6! 31 ♘g3 ♘g4 was stronger) **31 ♕c1 ♗d8 32 ♗g3 ♕e7**

Ah, time-trouble! Better was 32...f5 or 32...♕c6! (but not 32...♗xa5 33 f5!).

33 ♖a2 ♕f6 34 ♕d2 ♕f5

After 34...♘c3 35 ♘xc3 ♖xd4 there could have followed 36 ♘e4 (36 ♕c1?! bxc3 37 ♕xc3) 36...♗xe4 37 ♕xb4.

35 ♗d3 ♕f6 36 ♗c4 ♗e7 37 ♕d3 ♖ed8 38 ♗e1 ♕f5 39 ♕d2 ♕e4?! (after 39...♕f6 things would still have been difficult for White) **40 ♗d3**



40...♕e3+

With the last move before the time control Bogoljubow goes in for the exchange of queens, slightly easing his opponent's thankless defence.

41 ♗f2 (here the game was adjourned) **41...♕xd2 42 ♖xd2 ♖c8 43 ♗c4 ♔g7 44 g3 ♖cd8 45 ♖c1 h6** (good was 45...♘c3 or 45...♘f6 with the idea of ...♘g4xf2) **46 ♗d3 f5**

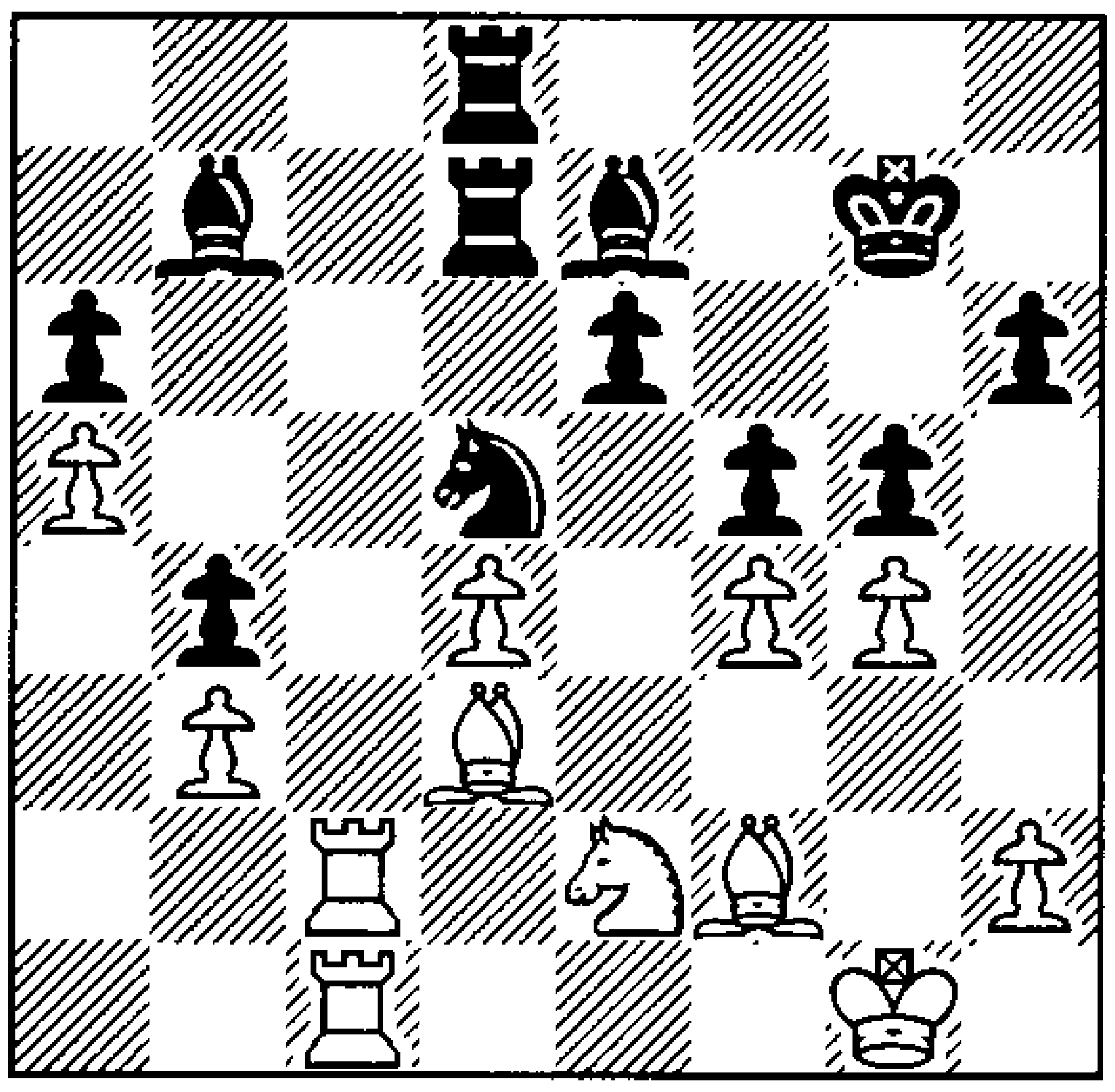
Again strong was 46...♘f6!? 47 ♖dd1 ♘g4 48 ♗e1 ♘e3 49 ♖d2 ♘f5! with an obvious advantage.

47 ♖dc2 g5!?

47...♔f7 was much quieter. But Black begins playing 'for a win' at the most inappropriate moment. And yet this move, which was condemned by everyone, is in my view not so bad.

48 g4!!

An unexpected, splendid resource – this is pure Alekhine!



48...♘xf4?

And immediately comes a ridiculous mistake. 'This exchange of his best-posted piece against the cripple at e2 definitely spoils Black's position.' (Alekhine) He had three acceptable replies:

1) 48...fxg4 – this would seem to be dangerous on account of 49 f5! ♔f6! (49...exf5? 50 ♗xf5 ♖d6 51 ♗g3 ♘e3 52 ♖c7; 49...♘f4? 50 ♘xf4 gxf4 51 fxe6; 49...e5? 50 dxe5 are all winning for White) 50 fxe6 ♔xe6 (50...♖d6?! 51 ♘g3 ♖xe6 52 ♘h5+ ♔f7 53 ♗f5 ♖ed6 54 ♗g3) 51 ♘g3 ♖f8?! 52 ♖e1+ ♔f7 53 ♗f5 with an attack, but stronger is 51...♔f7! 52 ♗f5 ♘c3 with sharp play;

2) 48...gxf4 49 gxf5 ♔f7 (49...exf5 50 ♗xf5 ♖d6 51 ♖c7 ♔f6 52 ♗g4 is unclear) 50 fxe6+ ♔xe6 51 ♖e1 ♔f7 with some advantage to Black;

3) 48...♖f8! – this move, found by me, is not mentioned by any of the commentators, although here White still has a difficult position, for example: 49 gxf5 exf5 50 ♘g3 ♔g6 51 fxg5 hxg5 followed by ...♗d6, ...♘f4 etc.

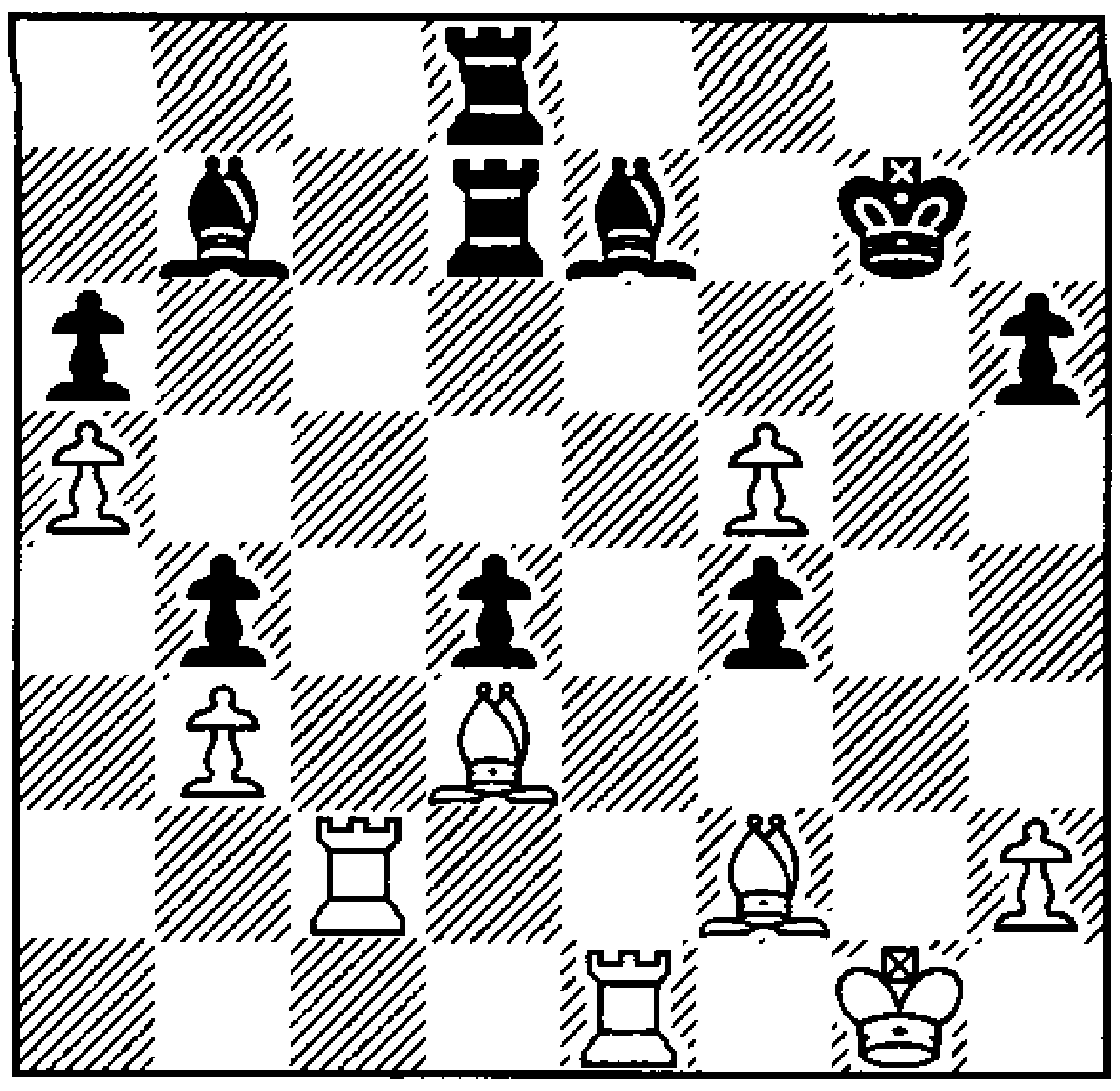
49 ♘xf4 gxf4 50 gxf5 e5

Also dismal is 50...exf5 51 ♗xf5 ♖d5 52 ♖c7 ♔f8 (even worse is 52...♖xf5 53 ♖xe7+ ♖f7 54 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 55 ♖c7+, 52...♔f6 53 ♖xb7 ♖xf5 54 ♗h4+, or 52...♗a8 53 ♖xe7+ ♔f6 54 ♖e6+ ♔xf5 55 ♖xa6) 53 ♖xb7 ♖xf5 54 ♖cc7 ♖e8 (54...♗d6 55 ♖h7!) 55 ♖c6 ♖xa5 56 ♖xh6.

51 ♖e1! exd4?

Bogoljubow 'drifts', overlooking his opponent's fine reply. Also bad is 51...♖c8? 52 ♖xc8 ♗xc8 53 ♗c4! exd4? 54 ♖xe7+! ♖xe7 55 f6+ or 51...♖d5? 52 ♗e4 ♖5d7 53 ♗xb7 ♖xb7 54 dxe5 winning.

However, after 51...♗f6! Black could still have held on: after the 'winning' 52 ♖c4, in my opinion, 52...♖g8! is totally unclear, while in the event of 52 dxe5 he is saved by an exchange sacrifice – 52...♖xd3! (not 52...♗xe5? 53 ♖xe5 ♖xd3 54 ♖e7+) 53 exf6+ ♔xf6 54 ♗h4+ ♔xf5 55 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 with a probable draw.



52 ♖xe7+!!

Spectacular! 'Alekhine does not miss such opportunities.' (Lasker) 52 ♗xd4+?! ♖xd4 53 ♖xe7+ ♔f8 54 ♖xb7 ♖xd3 55 ♖cc7 was incorrect in view of 55...♖e3! equalising.

52...♖xe7 53 ♗h4 ♔f7 (53...♖ed7 54 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 55 ♖c7+; 53...♖e3 54 ♖c7+) **54 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 55 ♖c7+ ♖d7 56 f6+ ♔e8** (56...♔d6 57 f7; 56...♔e6 57 ♗f5+) **57 ♗g6+!** (57 f7+ ♖xf7 58 ♗g6 ♗d5 was inaccurate) **57...♔d8 58 f7 ♔xc7 59 f8♕ f3 60 ♕xb4 ♖d6 61 ♗d3 1-0**

In what way is this game significant? Alekhine played the opening sloppily, ended up in a bad position, held on only thanks to enormous effort and resourcefulness, and barely had a direct clash with the hostile army begun, when he landed a couple of tactical blows – and the opponent immediately collapsed! Did this mean that he could win as he pleased?!

Bogoljubow was no longer capable of punishing his opponent for such audacious play, especially since Alekhine also gained some clean wins. After the 17th game the match reached the 'London standard' – 6-1 (with 10 draws) in the champion's favour, but by the rules in force he still needed a further 4½ points. Which he gained in the following nine games... but in what style!

Game 135

E.Bogoljubow-A.Alekhine

World Championship Match,
Germany 1934, 21st game
Queen's Gambit D30

1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 c4 a6?!

The defence named after Janowski, who played this back in London 1899 against Steinitz, Lasker and Pillsbury. Black's plan is in the event of 4 e3, avoiding 'superfluous' variations, to transpose into the Queen's Gambit Accepted: 4...dxc4 5 ♗xc4 b5 6 ♗d3 ♗b7 followed by ...c7-c5.

4 c5

4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♘c3 is more usual, but this position had been successfully defended by Rubinstein – against Bogoljubow (Sweden 1st matchgame 1920), Johner (Teplitz-Schonau 1922), Alekhine (Baden-Baden 1925) and Grünfeld (Marienbad 1925).

4...b6!

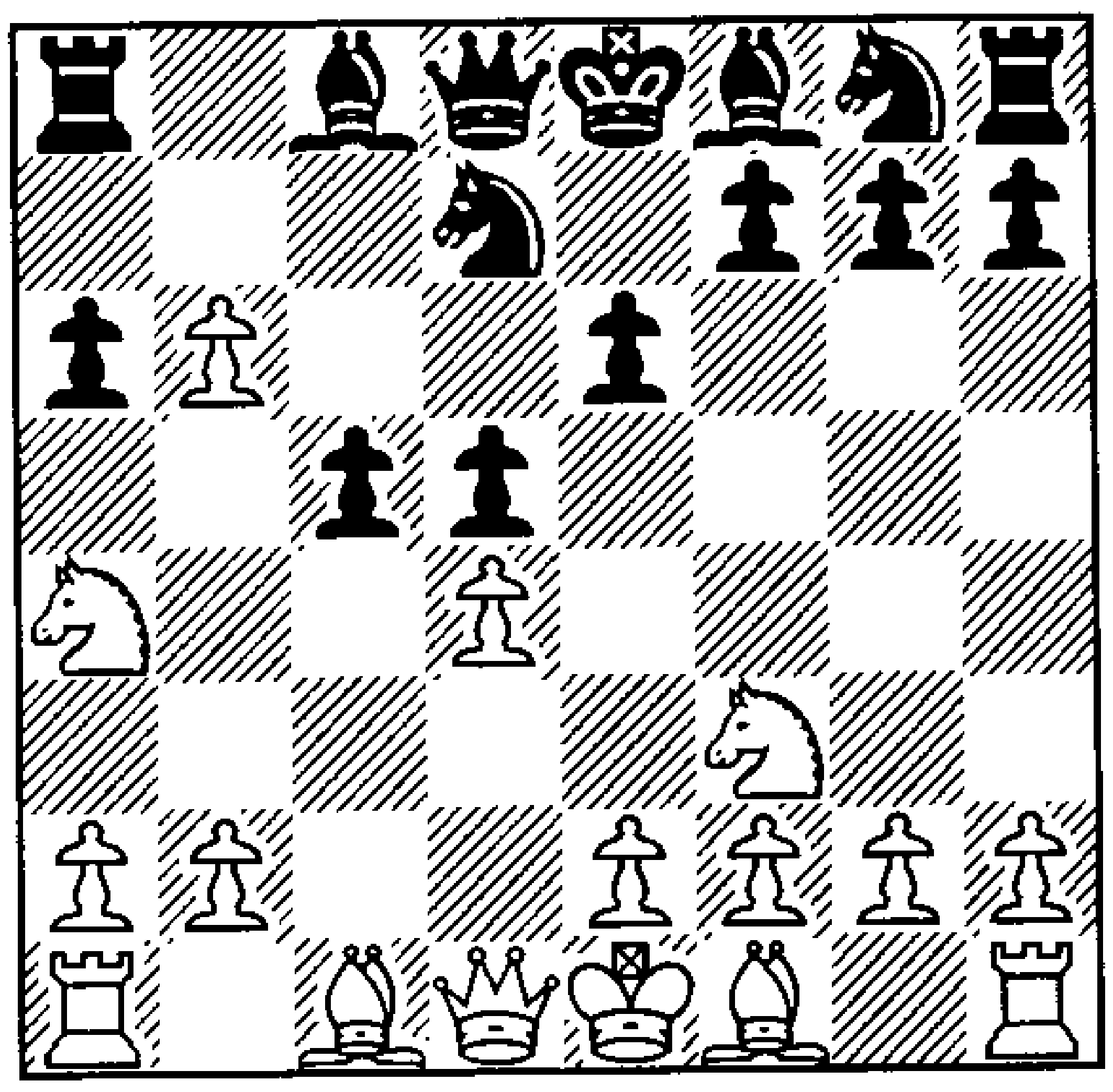
A recommendation of Tarrasch. The well-known game Alekhine-Rubinstein (The Hague 1921) went 4...♘c6?! 5 ♗f4 ♘ge7 6 ♘c3 ♘g6 7 ♗e3! b6 8 cxb6 cxb6 9 h4! ♗d6 10 h5 ♘ge7 11 h6! g6 12 ♗g5 0-0 13 ♗f6! and White gained a memorable victory.

5 cxb6 c5!?

Continuing to experiment. The modest 5...cxb6 leads to a somewhat inferior position.

6 ♘c3 ♘d7 7 ♘a4

Playing to hold the pawn, but it is also logical to play for rapid development – 7 e4!?



7...c4?

Again a *lapsus* in the opening! 7...cxd4! would have led to a good game, for example: 8 ♕xd4 ♘e7! (8...♗b7 9 ♗f4!) 9 e4 ♘c6 10 ♕e3 ♘b4! 11 ♗d3 ♘c5!, or 8 ♕b3 ♗b7 9 ♗f4 (9 ♘xd4 ♘c5 10 ♕d1 ♕d7! 11 ♘c3 ♕d6) 9...♘c5! 10 ♘xc5 (10 ♕d1 ♕d7!) 10...♗xc5 11 ♗c7 (11 ♗e5 ♘f6 12 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 13 ♘xd4 0-0 14 e3 ♘d7 is level) 11...♕e7 12 ♕a4+ ♔f8 13 a3 ♘f6 14 ♕a5 ♖c8 etc.

8 ♗d2 ♗d6 (if 8...♘gf6, then 9 ♗a5 and 10 e3) **9 b3 ♗b7**

Alas, 9...♘xb6 will not do in view of 10 ♘xb6 (10 ♗a5 ♗c7!, but not 10...♘xa4? 11 ♗xd8 ♗b4+ 12 ♘d2 c3 13 ♗g5) 10...♕xb6 11 bxc4 dxc4 12 e3 and wins.

10 e3 cxb3 (10...♖c8 11 ♖c1 ♗a3 12 ♖c3 ♗b4 13 ♖c2 would also not have solved Black's problems) **11 ♕xb3**

Already by the 11th move Black is in a terrible position – one simply wants to resign for him: White has an extra passed pawn at b6!

11...♘e7 12 ♗d3 0-0 13 0-0 ♘c6 14 ♖fc1 e5 15 ♗f5

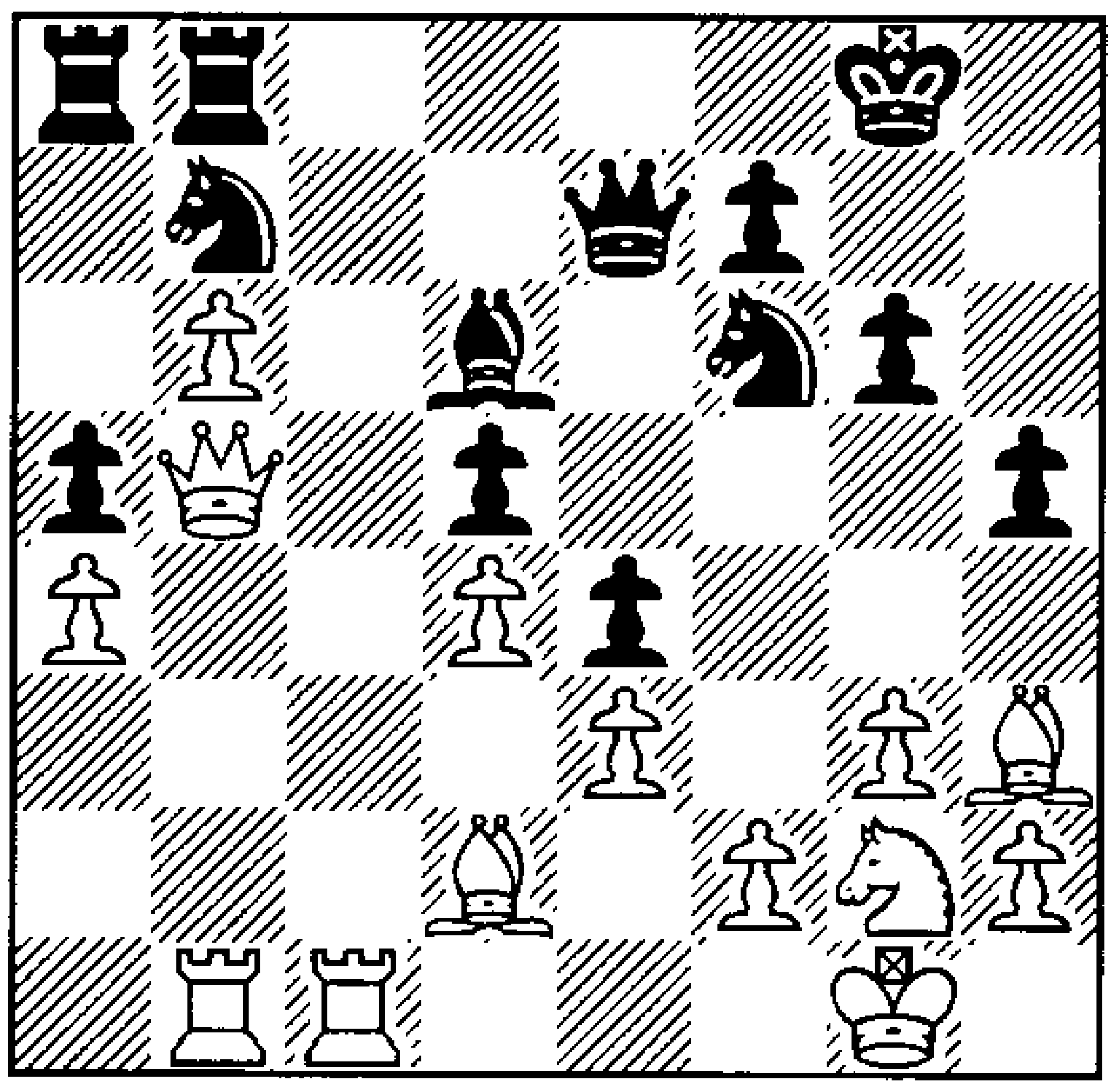
15 dxe5 ♘dxe5 16 ♗e2 is also possible,

only not 15 ♕xd5? ♘f6 16 ♕b3 e4.

15...e4 16 ♘e1 ♘f6 17 ♘c5 ♕e7 18 g3 ♖fb8 19 a4 a5 20 ♕b5 ♘d8 21 ♘xb7 (21 ♗xa5? is a mistake because of 21..♗c6 22 ♕b4 ♘b7) **21...♘xb7 22 ♖ab1 h5**

Alekhine plays as though nothing has happened, and finds some chances! However, for the moment Black's position does not improve.

23 ♘g2 (23 h4!?) **23...g6 24 ♗h3**



24...g5! (unexpectedly beginning to pursue the bishop) **25 ♗f5 ♕d8! 26 ♖c6 ♗e7** (threatening ...♘d6) **27 h4!**

Bogoljubow is also resourceful!

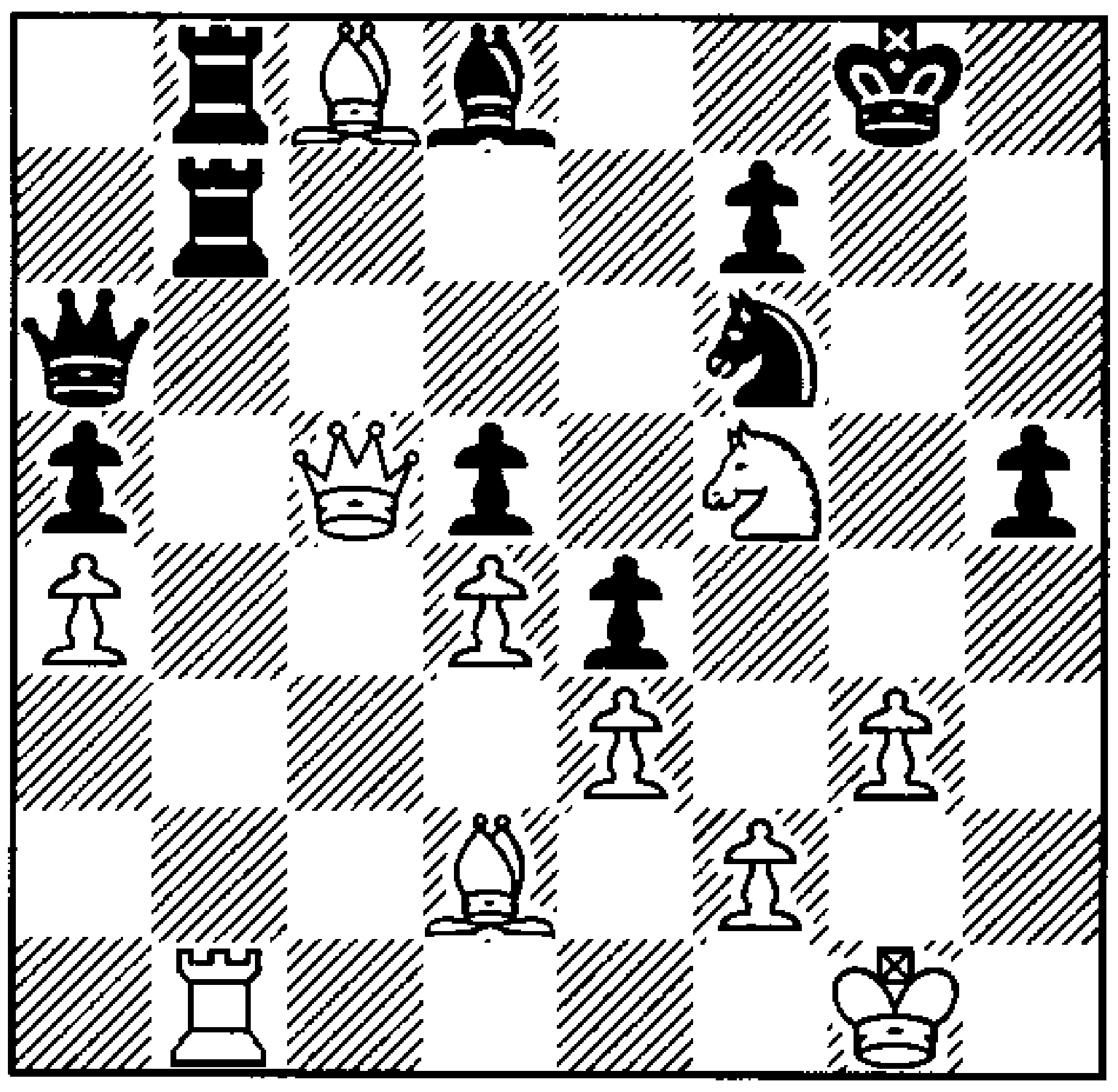
27...gxh4

If 27...♘d6, then 28 ♖xd6! ♕xd6 29 hxg5, while 27...g4 is met by the decisive 28 ♖xf6! (this is more energetic than 28 ♘f4 ♘d6 29 ♖xd6 ♕xd6 30 ♗xa5 ♗d8 31 ♖c1 ♕a3 32 ♖c6 ♕a1+ 33 ♔g2) 28...♗xf6 29 ♘f4, picking up virtually all the pawns.

28 ♘xh4 ♘d6 29 ♖xd6

Bogoljubow attaches an exclamation mark to this move, although he could also have won by 29 ♕e2 ♘c4 (29...♕e8! 30 ♖bc1 ♕d8 is somewhat more tenacious) 30 b7 (30 ♖b5!?) 30...♘d6 (30...♖a7? 31 ♖c8) 31 ♗c8 ♖a7 32 ♘f5.

29...♕xd6 30 b7 (30 ♗xa5 ♗d8!) **30...♖a7 31 ♗c8 ♗d8 32 ♘f5 ♕a6 33 ♕c5** (the line 33 ♗c1 ♕xb5 34 ♖xb5 ♖a6 35 ♗a3 ♖c6 36 ♗e7! was a simpler way to win the game) **33...♖axb7**



34 ♖b5??

I really don't know what White was thinking of. He could have won by 34 ♖xb7 (34 ♔g2!?) 34...♖xb7 35 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 36 ♗xa5 (also good is 36 ♕d6!? ♕c8 37 ♗xa5 or 36...♕a8 37 ♕f4 ♘g4 38 ♘d6) 36...♕b1+ 37 ♔g2 ♕d1! 38 ♘h6+ ♔h7 39 ♗xd8 ♕f3+ 40 ♔g1 ♕d1+ 41 ♔h2 ♕e2 42 ♕f8! ♕xf2+ 43 ♔h3, or 38 ♘h4!? ♘g4 39 ♗b4! ♔h7 (39...♘xe3+ 40 fxe3 ♕e2+ 41 ♔g1! ♕xe3+ 42 ♔h2 ♗xh4 43 ♕f8+) 40 ♕xd5 ♘xe3+ 41 fxe3 ♕e2+ 42 ♔h3 ♕g4+ 43 ♔h2 (Bogoljubow).

34...♖xb5 35 ♗xa6 ♖xc5 36 dxc5 ♘d7

As a result of White's blunder Black is simply the exchange up. But the subsequent play in time-trouble is exciting: it is now Alekhine who throws away the win...

37 c6 ♘e5 (with ideas of ...♘f3+ and ...♘xc6) **38 ♘d4 ♖b2** (inferior is 38...♘f3+? 39 ♘xf3 exf3 40 ♗b5 ♗c7 41 ♗c3) **39 ♗c3 ♖b1+ 40 ♔g2 ♗b6?**

With the last move before the time control Black loses almost all of his enormous advantage. 40...♘f3! 41 ♘b5 ♖c1 42 ♗b7 ♔h7! 43 c7 ♗xc7 44 ♗xd5 f5 would have been decisive.

41 ♗b7 ♘f3! 42 ♘xf3

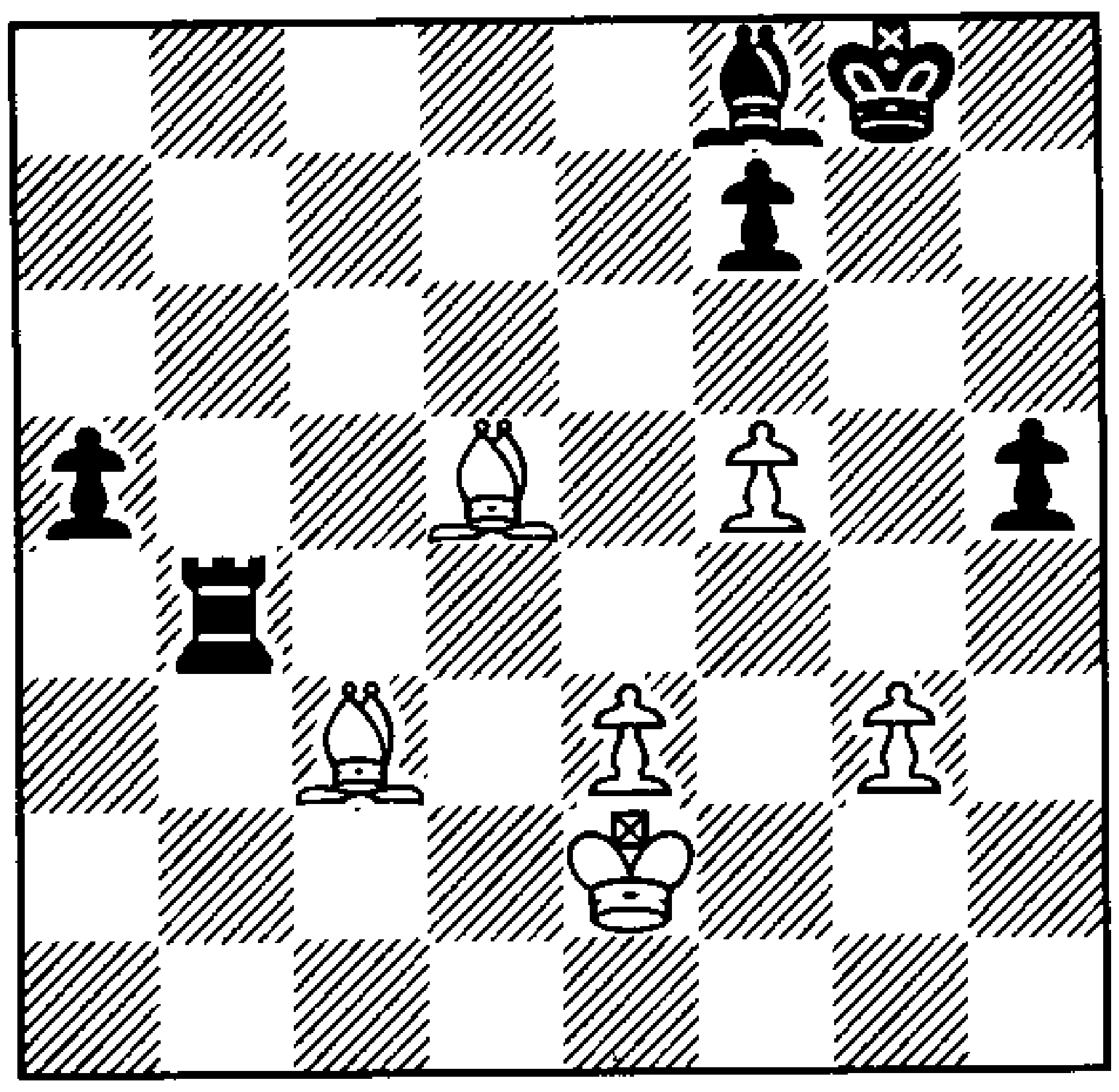
The complicated variations after 42 ♘f5!? would most probably have led to a draw: 42...♔f8 43 ♗g7+ ♔e8 44 ♘d6+ (44 ♗f6!? Lasker) 44...♔d8 (or 44...♔e7 45 ♘c8+ ♔d8 46 ♘xb6 ♖xb6 47 ♗c3! ♖b4 48 ♗xb4 axb4

49 c7+ ♔xc7 50 ♗xd5) 45 ♗f6+ ♔c7 46 ♘b5+ ♔b8 47 ♗e7 ♗c7 48 ♗c5 ♖g1+ 49 ♔h3 ♖h1+ 50 ♔g2 with equality.

42...exf3+ 43 ♔xf3 ♗c7 44 ♗a6?

Why give up the pawn? After 44 ♔e2! (with the idea of ♗a6-b5) 44...♖b3 45 ♗d4 ♖a3 there is counterplay with 46 f4! ♖xa4 47 ♗a6! ♖a2+ (47...♖b4 48 ♗e5) 48 ♔d1! a4 (48...♔f8 49 ♗e5 ♗b6 50 c7 ♗xc7 51 ♗xc7) 49 ♗e5 ♗b6 50 ♗d4 ♗d8 51 ♗f6! equalising (Bogoljubow).

44...♖c1 45 ♗d4 ♖xc6 46 ♗b7 ♖c4 47 ♗xd5 ♖xa4 (now Black has a technically won position) **48 ♔e2 ♗d6 49 f4 ♗f8 50 f5 ♖b4 51 ♗c3**



51...♖g4?

Even at the end Alekhine's play shows a lack of accuracy and he makes a serious mistake, allowing the exchange of his outside passed pawn for the weak g3-pawn. After 51...♖b5! the a-pawn would have swiftly advanced.

52 ♗e5?

Much better drawing chances were offered by 52 ♗xa5! ♖xg3 53 ♗c7 ♖g5 54 e4 and 55 ♔f3, when it is still possible somehow to combat the h-pawn.

52...a4 (now this infantryman cannot be stopped) **53 e4 h4 54 ♔f3 h3! 55 ♗f4 ♖g7 56 g4** (or 56 e5 ♖h7 57 e6 ♗c5! 58 exf7+ ♔f8 winning) **56...♖h7 57 ♗h2 ♗d6! 58 ♗xd6 h2 59 ♗xh2 ♖xh2 60 e5 a3 61 e6 fxe6 62 ♗xe6+ ♔f8 63 ♔f4 a2 0-1**

Alekhine won the match comparatively easily, but wins such as those in the fourth and 21st games did him a bad service: he became convinced of his own superiority and complete impunity! And in the 1935 match with Euwe there was to be unexpected retribution...

It is a pity that the world did not in fact see an Alekhine-Capablanca return match. Bogoljubow was undoubtedly a more convenient opponent for the champion. Just as Marshall and Janowski were for Lasker, or, say, Larsen was for Spassky or Fischer. Just as Korchnoi would have been for Karpov, if the intrigue regarding my disqualification in the summer of 1983 had succeeded. Just as Shirov would have been for me in the autumn of 1998 or 2000, and whom Kramnik would have liked to succeed in the qualifying tournament at Dortmund 2002.

The Champion's Golden Era

It has to be said that, apart from anything, Alekhine was the most outstanding chess author and analyst of his time. His tournament books of New York (1924 and 1927) and Nottingham (1936), his books of best games and his *On the Road to the World Championship* became classic examples of the art of annotation. But, in my opinion, especially interesting are his controversial articles about the development of chess thinking.

For example, in his reports for the *New York Times* from Carlsbad 1929 the world champion divided the participants into two main groups, 'neo-romanticists' (for which read 'hypermodernists') and 'reformists', predicting that the tournament

'...promises to develop into a determined battle between the adherents of two schools opposed in their fundamental interpretation of the essence of chess. One group is represented by the former world's champion, José Capablanca of Cuba, who in addition to being a devotee of sixty-four squares is also fond of tennis and other physical sports. With him are two engineers, Geza Maróczy of Hungary and Dr M. Vidmar of Yugoslavia; the mathematician, Dr Max Euwe of Holland, and that well-known explorer of chess variations E. Grünfeld of Vienna.

For them the "what" of chess is more important than the "how". Victory to them is the sole aim of the game. Only in rare instances, when their creative instinct masters their sporting will, do they become interested in the "quality", and it then asserts itself in the practical application of scientific chess experience.

The outcome of the rejection of the creative aspects of chess could easily be foreseen. It resulted in the school of reformists, led by Capablanca, who feared that theory, highly developed, might result in a paralysis of the game and they therefore sought to revivify it through propagating a revision of the rules of play. Now, just what does this postulation mean?

First, an overestimation of the force of theory in a utilitarian sense.

Second, a disregard for the intuitive – the imaginative – and all those other elements which raise chess to the level of an art.

Third, it results in a general 'shallowing' of the creative performance.

To just such a deadening level the reformist school, these pseudo-scientists, would reduce the noble game of chess, but fortunately there prevails a stronger oppositional force which first asserted itself in the play of Breyer and Réti, whose premature deaths were a distinct loss to the chess world. As representatives in the present Carlsbad tournament of their interpretation we name E.D. Bogoljubow of Russia, A. Nimzowitsch of Denmark, Dr S. Tartakower of France, E. Canal of Peru, F. Sämisch of Germany and E. Colle of Belgium.

These masters have succeeded in demonstrating that even in the realm of the newest theoretical accomplishments there still remains plenty of scope for the development of the imagination, temperament and will-power. To their achievements the game of chess, since the War, owes its unexpected advance.

One could fitly designate this group as the "neo-romanticists", and they have been referred to as such, but they might also justly be called the "tragedians of chess" because, while the reformist will greet the mistakes of his opponent in a utilitarian sense, the neo-romanticist desires to carry his grand scheme to completion.

Right here enters that moment when the art of chess may be called the most tragic of all arts, because the chess artist, in a measure, is dependent on an element outside the scope of his power; that element is the hostile co-workers who through carelessness constantly threaten to wreck a flawless mental edifice. The chess player who aspires to demonstrate the "how" of the game will view the single point scored a poor offset for the failure to gratify his artistic yearnings.

His bent for creating often results in disappointments, but in the end the passion is victorious, and it is only due to the sacrificing powers of many enlightened chess talents, because their creative leanings have foregone professional careers, that the chess world will be freed of the superstition of the reformists. Chess is not football.

Between the two groups of contenders for prize money in the Carlsbad tournament we also would mention the so-called "classicists", primarily Akiba Rubinstein of Poland, then that apostle of the king's pawn, Rudolph Spielmann of Austria, and last, but not least, the gifted but erratic American champion, Frank Marshall.'

Despite his emigration, Alekhine also published articles in the Soviet magazine *Shakhmaty*, edited by Nikolai Grekov. But at the end of 1929, after his match with Bogoljubow, this magazine closed. As Krylenko explained, 'we are not taking measures to retain *Shakhmaty*, for the reason that it is an apolitical magazine which has not included political articles, and for the reason that one of its constant contributors has been Alekhine.'

After winning his matches against Capablanca and Bogoljubow, the champion also shone in the tournament arena. Early in 1930 he played in a strong tournament in the Italian resort of San Remo, after agreeing for himself a fee of 20,000 lira (or in the event of Capablanca participating – 40,000 lira; the Cuban, of course, was not invited). The result exceeded all expectations and the ancient records of Lasker in London 1899 and Paris 1900: 1. Alekhine – 14 out of 15 (only two draws!); 2. Nimzowitsch – 10½; 3. Rubinstein – 10; 4. Bogoljubow – 9½; 5. Yates – 9; 6. Ahues – 8½; 7-8. Vidmar and Spielmann – 8; 9-10. Maróczy and Tartakower – 7½ etc.

Of his games in San Remo I would single out his win over Vidmar, who was literally torn apart by the Alekhine cavalry and then finished off in a classic ending with knight and three pawns against rook and two (I had a similar ending with Kramnik in the second game of the Botvinnik Memorial, Moscow 2001), and also this impressive, crushing win against the ambitious second prize-winner – Nimzowitsch.

Game 136

A.Alekhine-A.Nimzowitsch

San Remo 1930

French Defence C17

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 ♗d2 (Bogoljubow's move; 5 a3! is undoubtedly more active) **5...♘e7 6 ♘b5**

Or 6 a3 ♗xc3 7 ♗xc3 ♘bc6 (7...b6) 8 ♘f3 cxd4 9 ♗xd4 ♘f5 equalising.

6...♗xd2+ 7 ♕xd2 0-0 8 c3

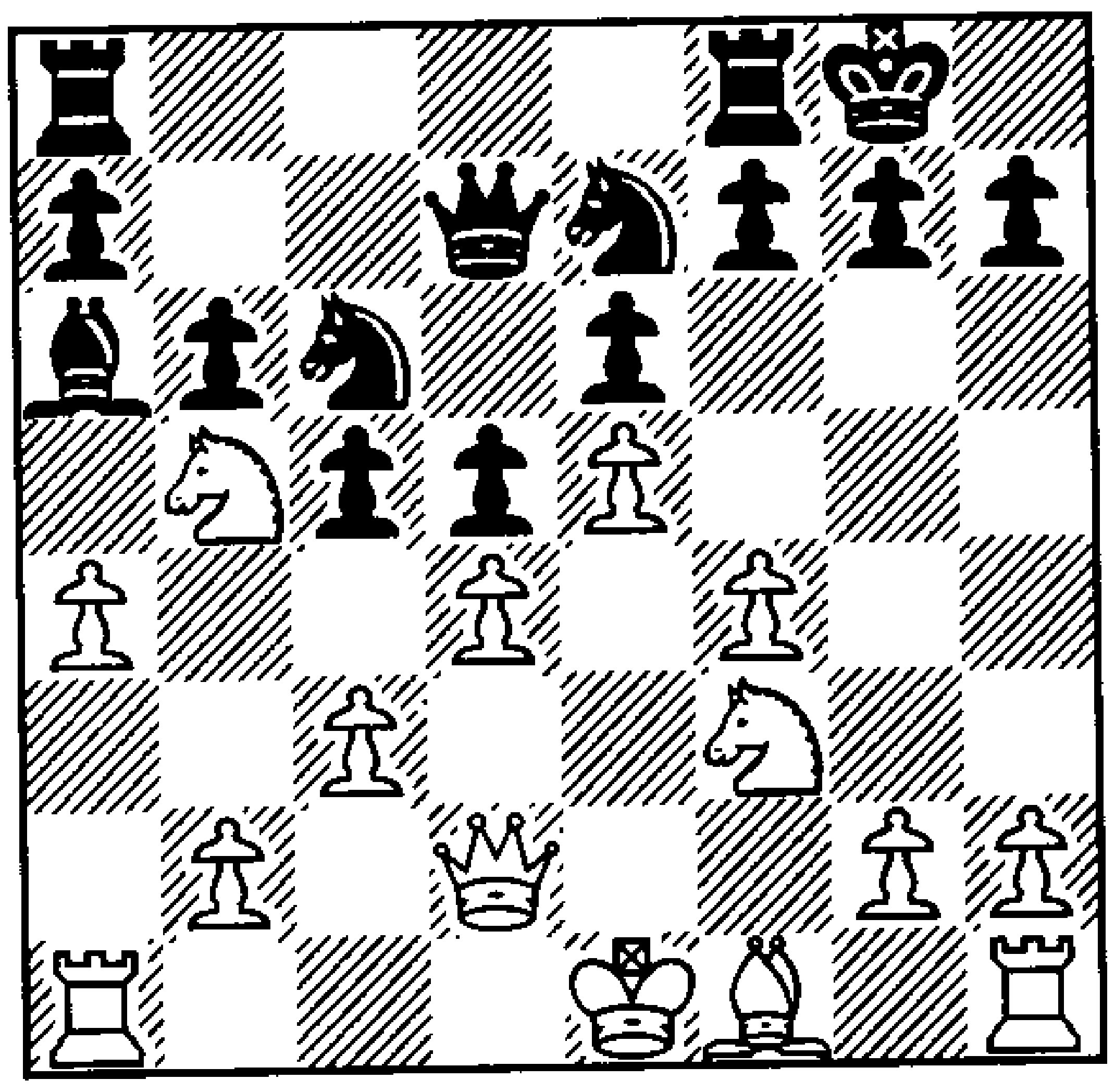
If 8 ♘f3, then 8...cxd4. More lively is 8 dxc5!? ♘bc6 (8...♘d7!) 9 ♘f3 b6!? 10 cxb6 ♕xb6 11 0-0-0! ♖b8 12 b3 ♕c5 13 ♘bd4 a5 14 ♔b1 a4 15 ♗d3 h6 with sharp play (Spassky-Bronstein, 24th USSR Championship, Moscow 1957).

8...b6?!

'A groundless attempt: Black does not succeed in exchanging his c8-bishop. Good – and natural enough – was 8...♘f5! (preventing ♘d6), as played with success by the same Nimzowitsch against Dr Lasker in Zürich, 1934.' (Alekhine) That game went 9 g4?! ♘h4! etc. Or 9 ♗d3 ♗d7 10 ♘f3 ♗xb5 11 ♗xb5 ♕b6 12 ♗d3 ♘c6 with equality (Stoltz-Nimzowitsch, Stockholm match 1934). 8...f6!? is also adequate.

9 f4 ♗a6 10 ♘f3 ♕d7 11 a4! ♘bc6

In the event of 11...c4?! 12 ♘d6 ♘c8 (or 12...f6 13 ♗e2) 13 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 14 ♗e2 Black has a bad French.



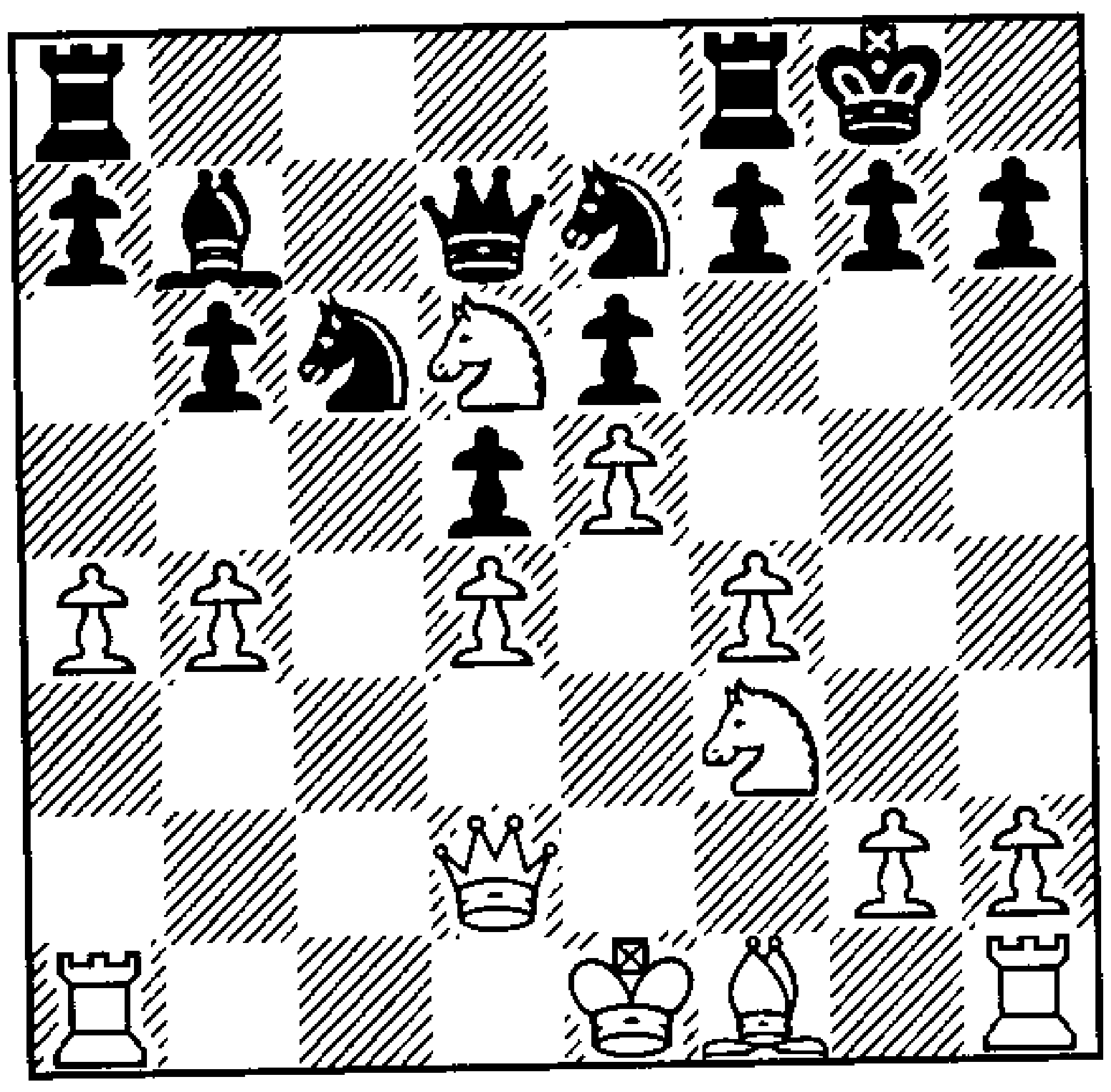
12 b4!

'Strangely enough, this more or less conventional move (by which White prevents ...♘a5 and at the same time forces a clearing of the situation in the centre) created a kind of small sensation at the time; the late Dr Tarrasch, for instance, called it in his comments "highly original". To my mind more surprising than the move is the fact that a player of Nimzowitsch's class, when adopting the plan started by 8...b6, did not take this possibility into serious consideration.' (Alekhine) Today procedures such as 12 b4 are already truisms...

12...cxb4

After 12...c4 both 13 ♘d6 and 13 ♘a3 are possible. Here, as Alekhine put it, 'White would not have much technical difficulty in exploiting, in a decisive manner, his advantage in space on the kingside.'

13 cxb4 ♗b7 14 ♘d6



14...f5?

'The decisive strategical error. The only chance of obtaining some more space lay in 14...a5 15 ♗b5 (better than 15 b5 ♘b4) 15...axb4 16 0-0, after which the initiative of White – who would have to spend some time in regaining the b-pawn – would not develop so rapidly.' (Alekhine)

This comment is somewhat superficial (in those days it was customary to 'tell a good story') – after 16...♘c8! it is altogether unclear whether there is any initiative: 17 ♘xb7 (17 ♘xc8 ♖fxc8) 17...♕xb7 18 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 19 ♖fc1 ♕b7 20 ♕xb4 ♘e7 (21 a5 ♖a6 equalises).

15 a5! ♘c8 (if 15...bxa5, then 16 b5! ♘d8 17 ♖xa5 etc.) **16 ♘xb7 ♕xb7 17 a6! ♕f7** (not 17...♕e7 18 ♗b5! ♘xb4? 19 ♖b1 winning) **18 ♗b5!**

Now the game is effectively over: Black is unable to defend adequately his c6- and c7-squares.

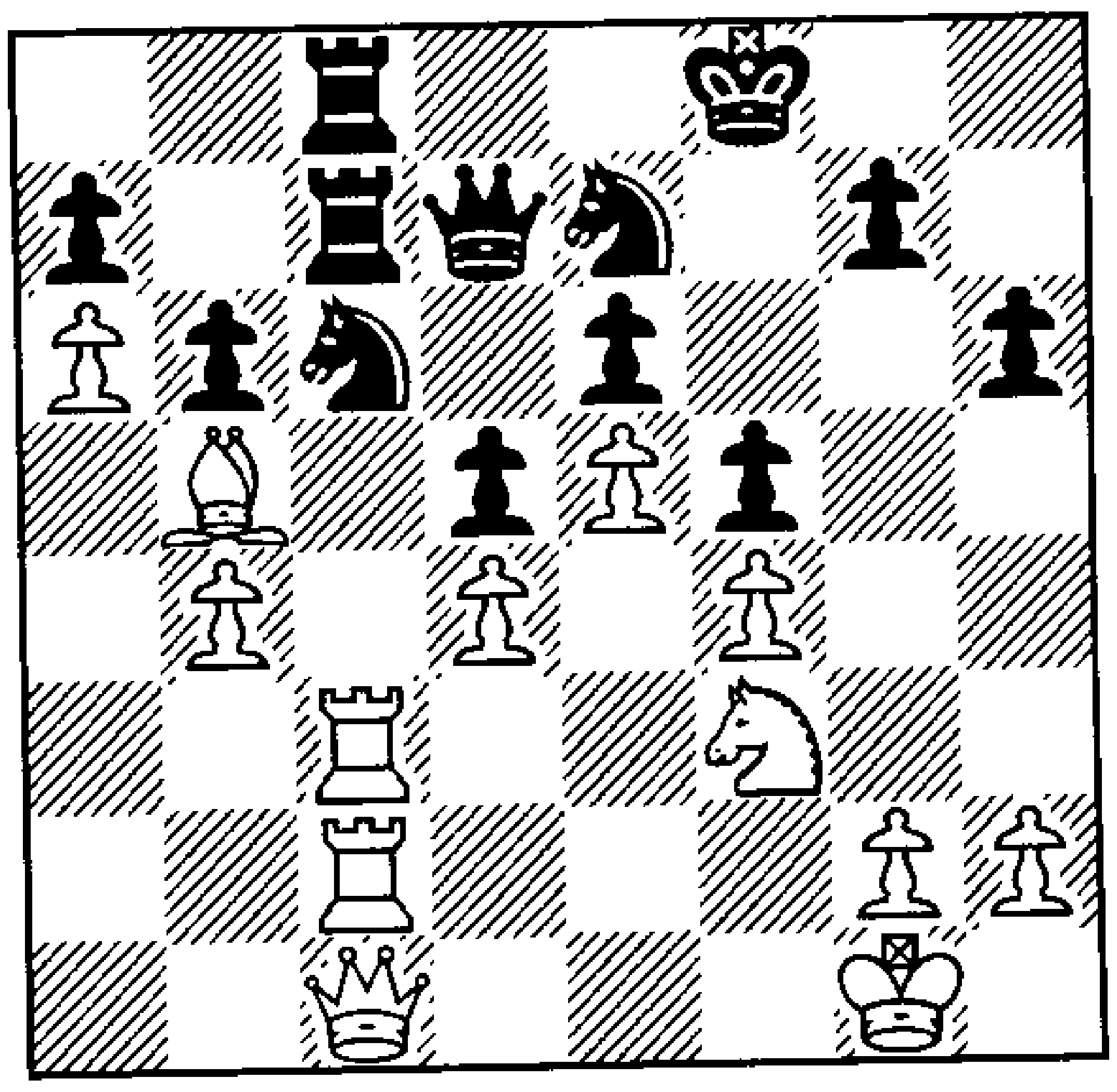
18...♘8e7 19 0-0 h6 (or 19...♖fc8 20 ♖fc1) **20 ♖fc1 ♖fc8 21 ♖c2 ♕e8**

If 21...♘d8 the champion was intending 22 ♖ac1 ♖xc2 23 ♖xc2 ♖c8 24 ♖xc8 (24 ♗d7!? ♖xc2 25 ♕xc2) 24...♘xc8 25 ♕c3 ♘e7 26 ♕c7 and wins.

22 ♖ac1 (the alternative 22 ♖a3! ♖c7 23 ♖ac3 ♖ac8 24 ♕c1 would have won more quickly) **22...♖ab8 23 ♕e3 ♖c7 24 ♖c3! ♕d7 25 ♖1c2 ♔f8**

'A desperate idea in a desperate position!' (Alekhine)

26 ♕c1 (after the tripling of the heavy pieces on the c-file White's pressure becomes unbearable) **26...♖bc8**



27 ♗a4!

'The last link of the positional attack started by 15 a5. In order to save the piece threatened by 28 b5 Black must sacrifice the b-pawn. After this he succeeds in protecting the important squares with his king, but must still resign as a consequence of complete zugzwang.' (Alekhine)

27...b5 28 ♗xb5 ♔e8 29 ♗a4 ♔d8 30 h4! 1-0

30...h5 31 ♔h2 g6 32 g3 ♕e8 33 b5 wins.

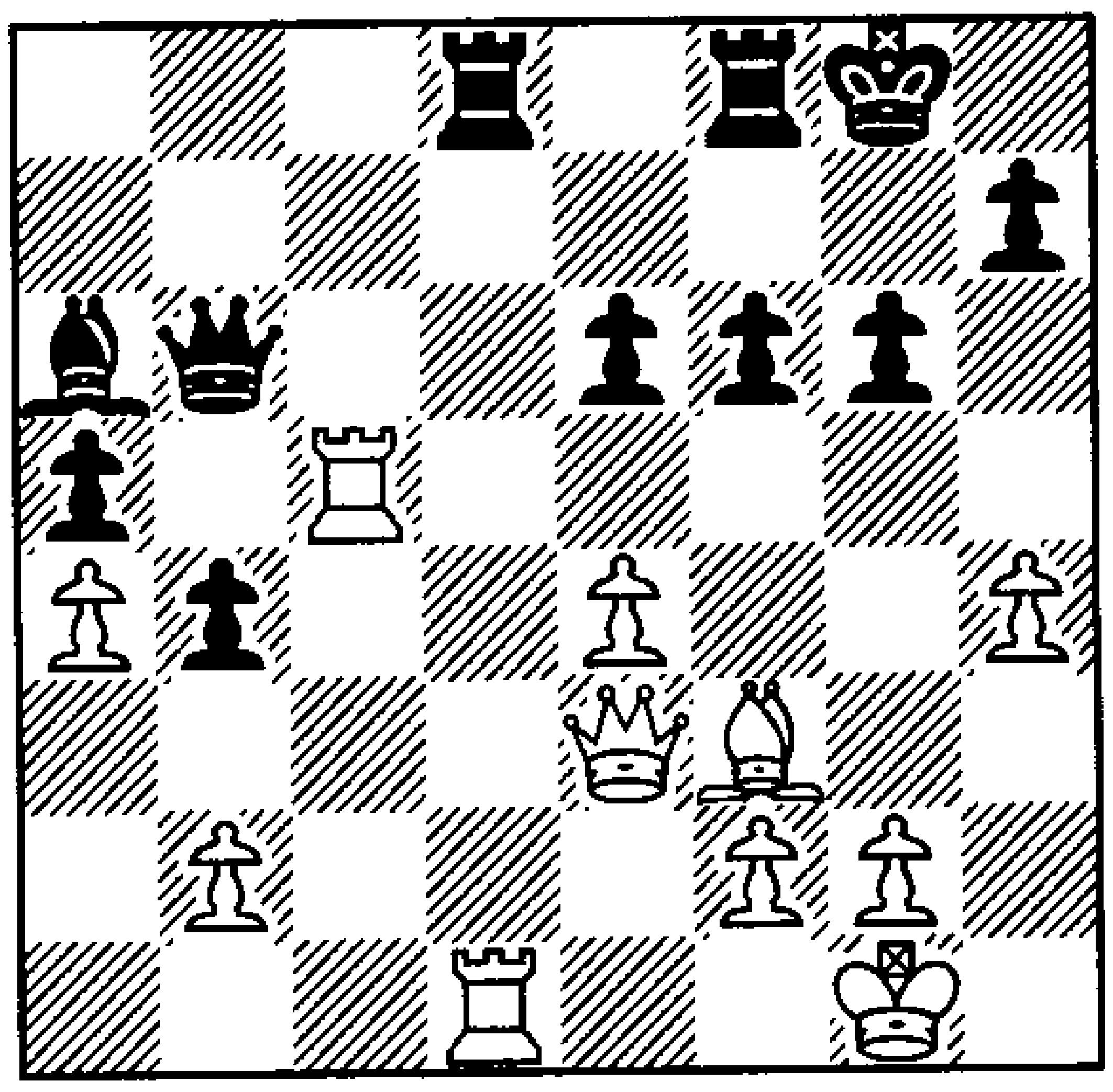
After performing splendidly for the French team in the Olympiads in Hamburg 1930 and Prague 1931, the champion continued his triumphal procession at the double-round super-tournament in Bled 1931: 1. Alekhine – 20½ out of 26 (again undefeated!); 2. Bogoljubow – 15; 3. Nimzowitsch – 14; 4-7. Vidmar, Kashdan, Flohr and Stoltz – 13½; 8. Tartakower – 13; 9-10. Kostic and Spielmann – 12½; 11. Maróczy – 12 etc.

Alekhine had clearly reached the peak of his career. The style of his victories created an enormous impression. Who else in chess history has won so many serious games with the help of brilliant tactical strokes?

Game 137

A.Alekhine-S.Flohr

Bled 1931

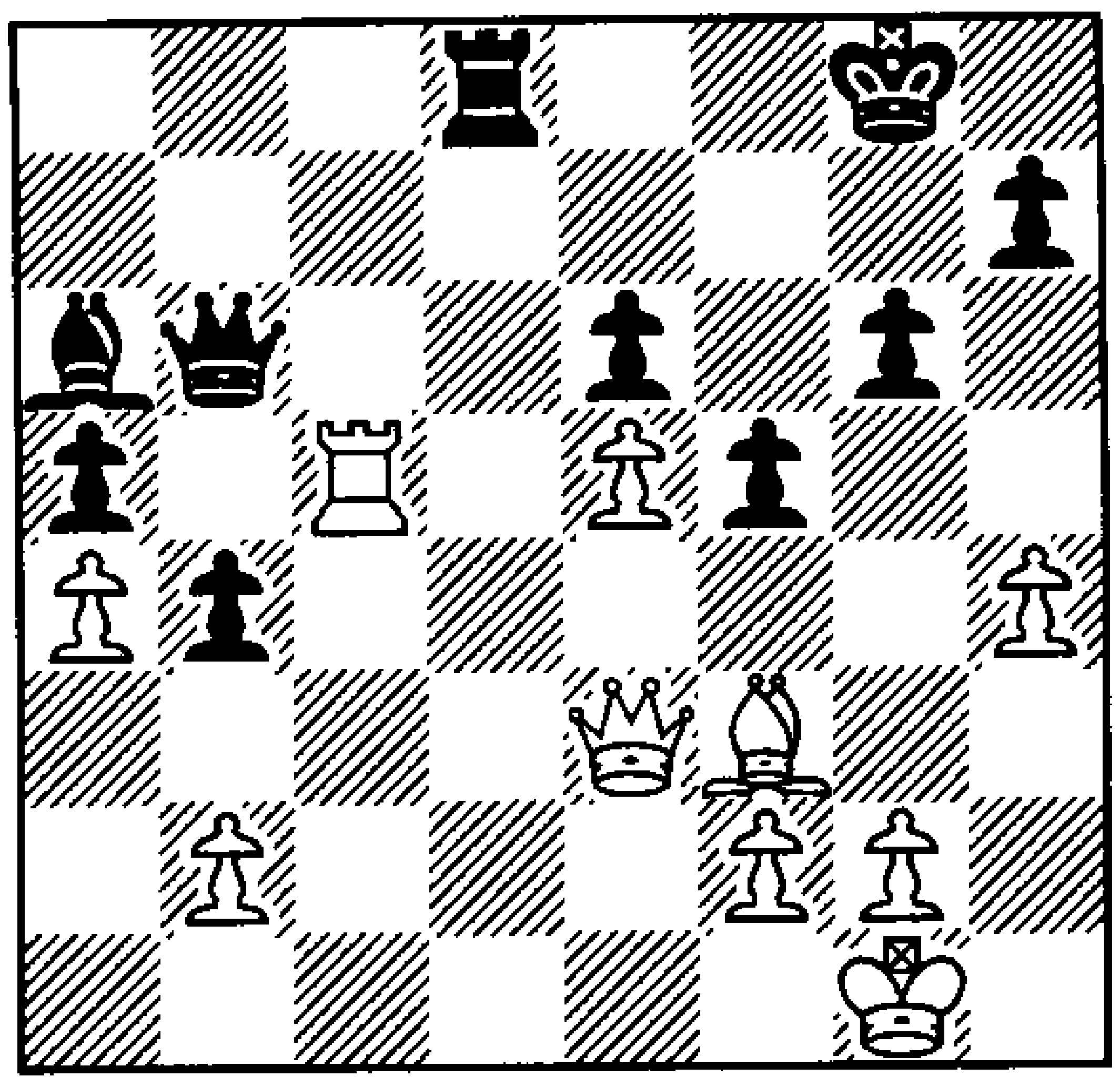


White's positional advantage is clear, but he needs to hurry: if Black can avoid direct threats, he may save the game. There are some combinative motifs: the black king's defences are weakened and in addition, as Alekhine put it, White can begin to 'speculate on the unprotected position of the enemy's queen.'

27 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 (if 27...♕xd8, then 28 e5! f5 29 ♖c6 ♗c8 30 ♕c5 wins) **28 e5!**

A useful move, exposing the enemy king. But the main thing is its tactical content: the immediate 28 ♖c8? (hoping for 28...♕xe3? 29 ♖xd8+) does not work because of 28...♕d6. Now, however, the d6-square is under control!

28...f5?



A blunder, but after 28...fxe5 29 ♕xe5 or 29 h5!? the win for White is merely a question of time.

29 ♖c8!! 1-0

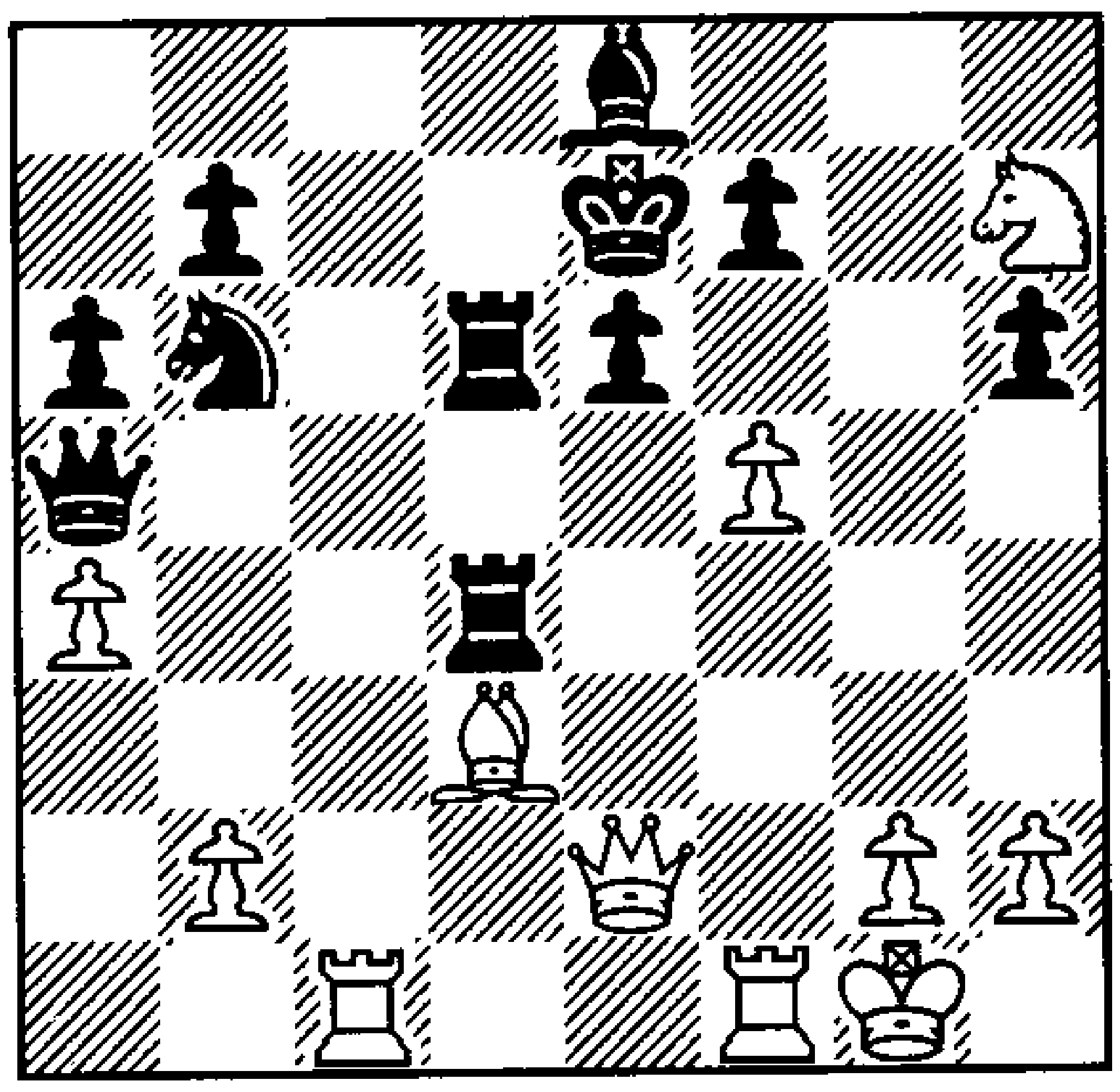
He loses his rook. This is the same theme as in the game with Grünfeld (*Game No.120*).

As was the case earlier, his opponents were unable to withstand the fierce Alekhine onslaught and would collapse, often in debatable, still completely unclear, or even favourable positions. In the following game the 'old wolf' Maróczy blundered badly.

Game 138

A.Alekhine-G.Maróczy

Bled 1931



25 b4!?

Another burst of imagination! Alekhine was terribly proud of this move and he attached two exclamation marks to it, although the computer is of a 'different opinion'. If immediately 25 ♕h5, then 25...♕d2! But 25 fxe6!? and ♕f3 came into consideration.

25...♕xb4

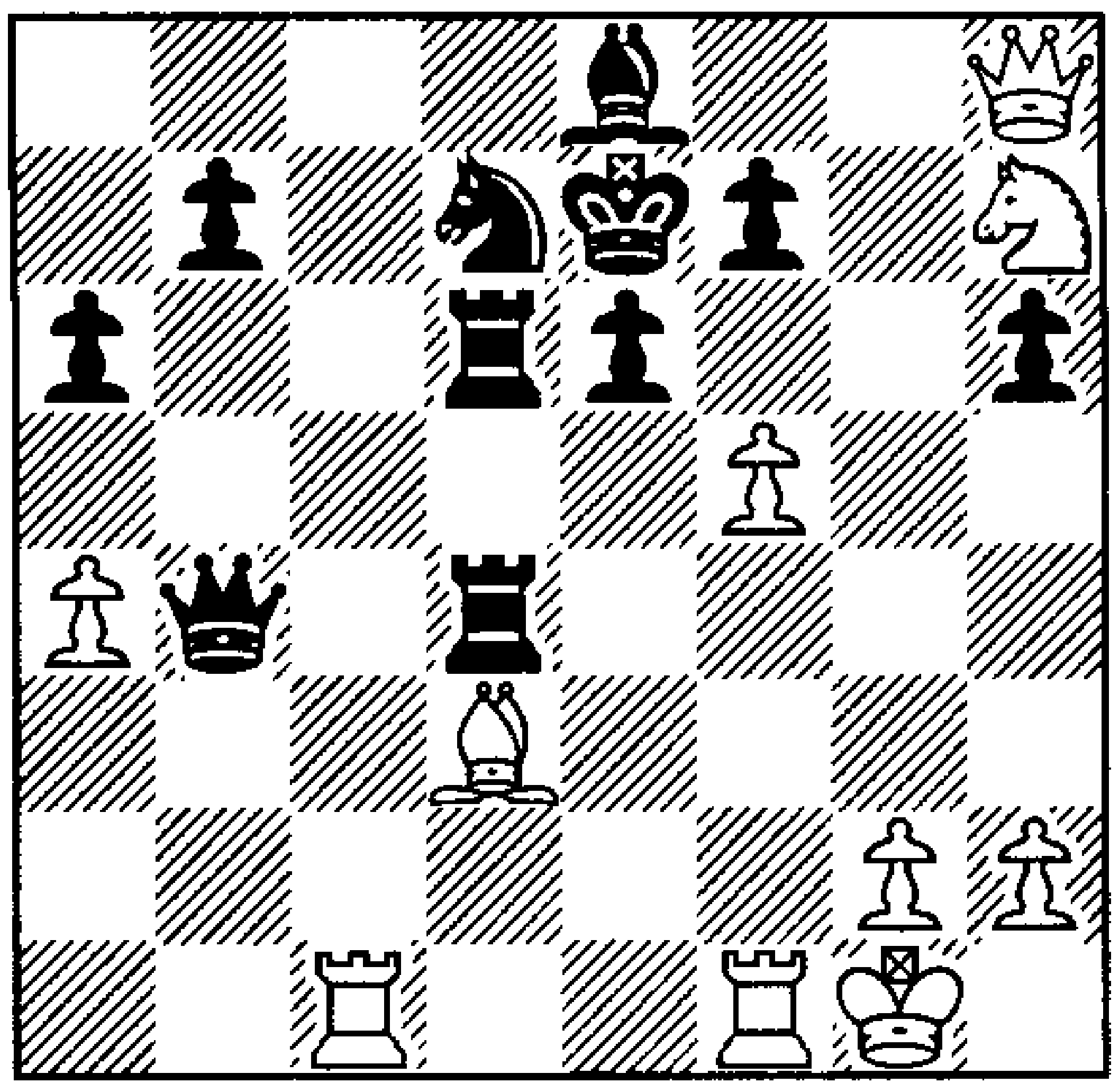
'An interesting finish would have occurred after 25...♖xb4 26 ♕h5! e5 27 f6+ ♔d8 28 ♕xh6 ♖xd3 29 ♕f8 ♖d7 30 ♖c5 ♕xa4 31 ♖xe5 and wins.' (Alekhine) Alas, after 31...♔c7! there is no trace of a win: 32 ♕c5+ ♔b8 33 ♖xe8+ ♔a7 34 ♕e5 a5, or 32 ♕xe8 ♕c2 33 ♘f8 ♖b2 34 ♖g5 ♖d1 35 ♕e5+ ♔c6 equalising. It would appear that slightly more is promised by 26 fxe6!?, but then it is not clear for what the b-pawn was given up.

26 ♕e5! (with the threat of 27 ♕f6+ ♔d7 28 ♘f8 mate) **26...♘d7**

'Protects both critical squares and – apparently – at last wins the bishop.' (Alekhine) In my opinion, 26...♘d5!? 27 ♖b1 ♕c5 28 ♖xb7+ ♔d8 29 ♔h1 ♖xd3 30 ♖b8+ ♔c7 31 ♖xe8 ♕c3 32 ♖c8+ ♔xc8 33 ♕xd6 ♘e3 34 ♕xa6+ ♔d8 35 ♕a8+ ♔c7 is also unclear.

27 ♕h8!

The culmination of this sharp skirmish.



27...♖xd3??

A black-out. 'The best reply 27...♕b6 would have forced White to disclose the last point of the combination started on move 25 – 28 a5! (the triumph of the neglected pawn!) with two lines: 28...♕xa5 29 ♖c8, or 28...♕a7 29 f6+ etc., as in the game.' (Alekhine)

But in fact the best reply was 27...♖c6! 28 ♖xc6 bxc6 29 fxe6 fxe6 30 ♘f6 ♘xf6 31 ♕xf6+ ♔d7 32 ♕xh6 ♖d5, when there is still all to play for.

28 f6+! 1-0

28...♘xf6 29 ♕xf6+ ♔d7 30 ♘f8 mate or 28...♔d8 29 ♕xe8+! ♔xe8 30 ♖c8 mate. One of those games that produced with Alekhine a dangerous stereotype: 'I can play what I want against them!' Later, in matches with Bogoljubow and Euwe, he would 'throw' material both where it was necessary, and where it wasn't...

In Bled Alekhine established a legendary achievement: he finished 5½ points(!) ahead of the second prize-winner Bogoljubow. And 6½ ahead of Nimzowitsch, whom he crushed in both of their games.

Game 139

A.Alekhine-A.Nimzowitsch

Bled 1931

French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♘e2

A 'perfectly harmless' move (4 e5! is correct). 'I selected it, however, because I knew that already on one occasion (against Sir G. Thomas at Marienbad, 1925) Nimzowitsch had shown an exaggerated voracity (6...f5) without having been duly punished for it.' (Alekhine)

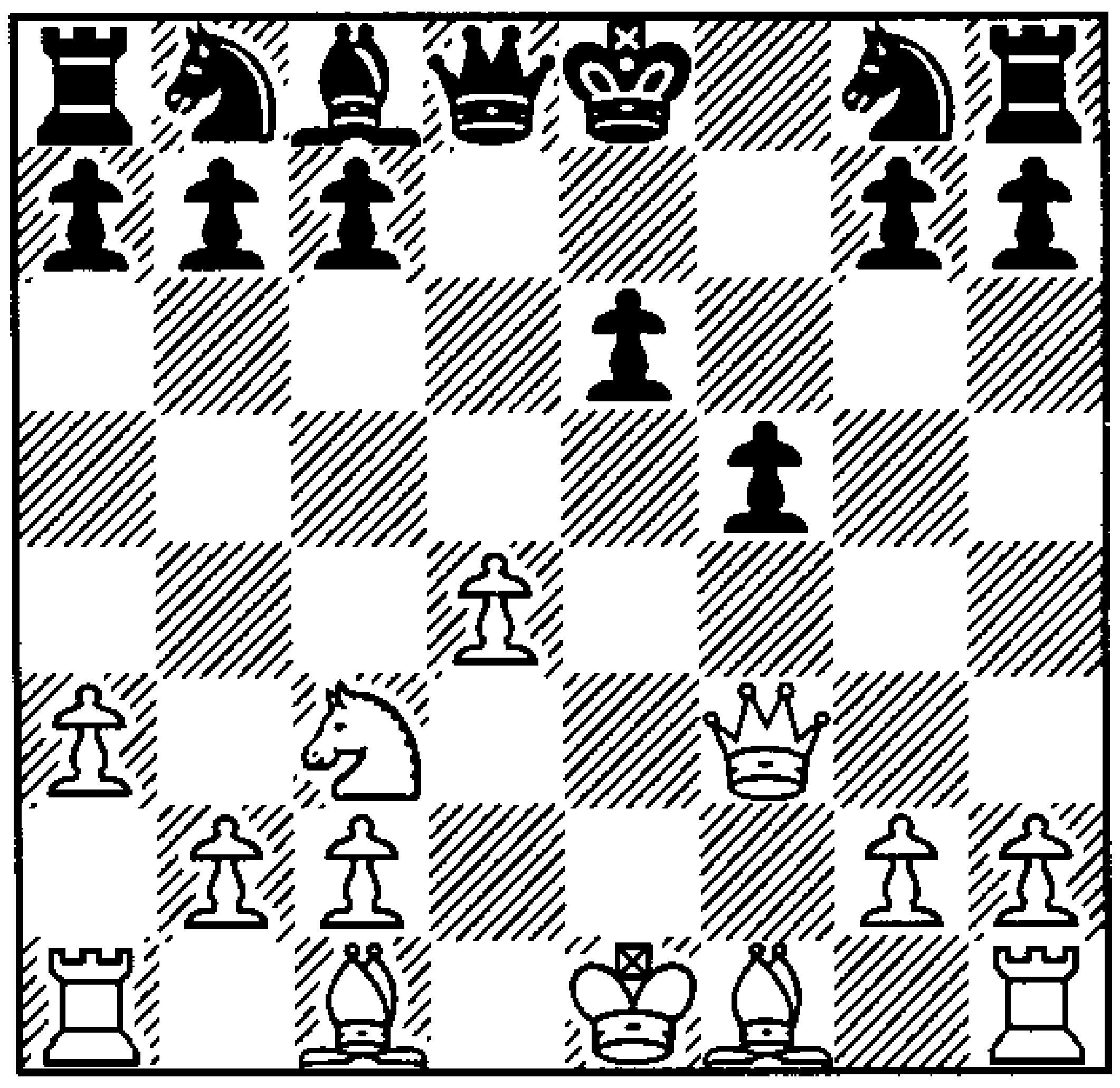
4...dxe4 5 a3 ♗xc3+ (5...♗e7 6 ♘xe4 ♘c6! is also good – *Game No.142*) **6 ♘xc3 f5?!**

Nowadays no one plays this. Theory recommends 6...♘c6! 7 ♗b5 ♘e7 etc.

7 f3!?

A surprise – a sacrifice of another pawn! The aforementioned game with Thomas went 7 ♗f4 ♘f6 8 f3, and after 8...0-0 (8...exf3 9 ♕xf3! ♕xd4? 10 ♘b5) 9 fxe4 ♘xe4 10 ♘xe4 fxe4 11 ♕d2 ♘d7 12 ♗e2 c5 13 0-0 cxd4 14 ♕xd4 ♕b6 Black achieved a normal position.

7...exf3 8 ♕xf3

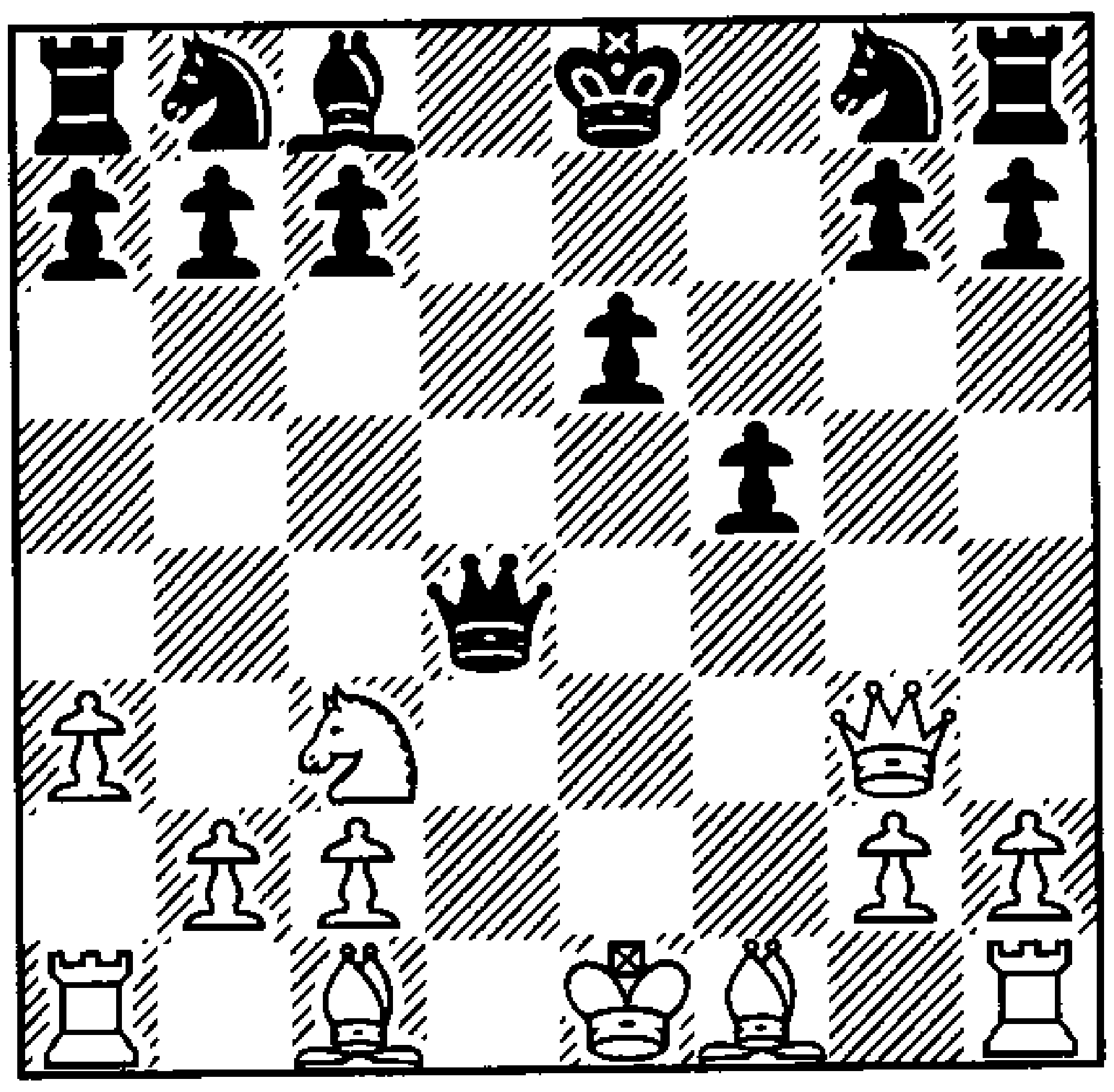


8...♕xd4

'This move is as good – or as bad – as 8...♕h4+ 9 g3 ♕xd4: in that case White would play 10 ♘b5 (*Alekhine. himself later played 10 ♗f4!? – G. K.*), and Black would not have had – as in the actual game – the defence 10...♕h4+ 11 g3 ♕e7 etc..' (Alekhine) 8...♘f6 9 ♗f4 (9 ♗g5) 9...0-0 10 0-0-0 c6 11 h3 was to White's advantage.

9 ♕g3!

Threatening both 10 ♘b5 (10...♕e4+ 11 ♗e2) and 10 ♗f4(e3). 9 ♗e3!? ♕g4 10 ♕f2 ♘f6 11 h3 ♕g6 12 0-0-0 0-0 13 ♗c4 ♘c6 14 g4 and 9 ♘b5!? ♕h4+ 10 g3 ♕e7 11 ♕c3! ♘a6 12 ♗f4 have also been tried.



9...♘f6!?

'This bold move is Black's comparatively best chance. Insufficient would be 9...♘e7 because of 10 ♗e3! ♕f6 11 0-0-0 etc..' (Alekhine) But in my opinion, here the play is unclear: 11...c6 (but not 11...e5?! 12 ♗g5 ♕g6 13 ♗xe7 ♕xg3 14 hxg3 ♔xe7 15 ♘d5+) 12 ♗g5 ♕g6 13 h4 0-0 14 h5 ♕f7 etc.

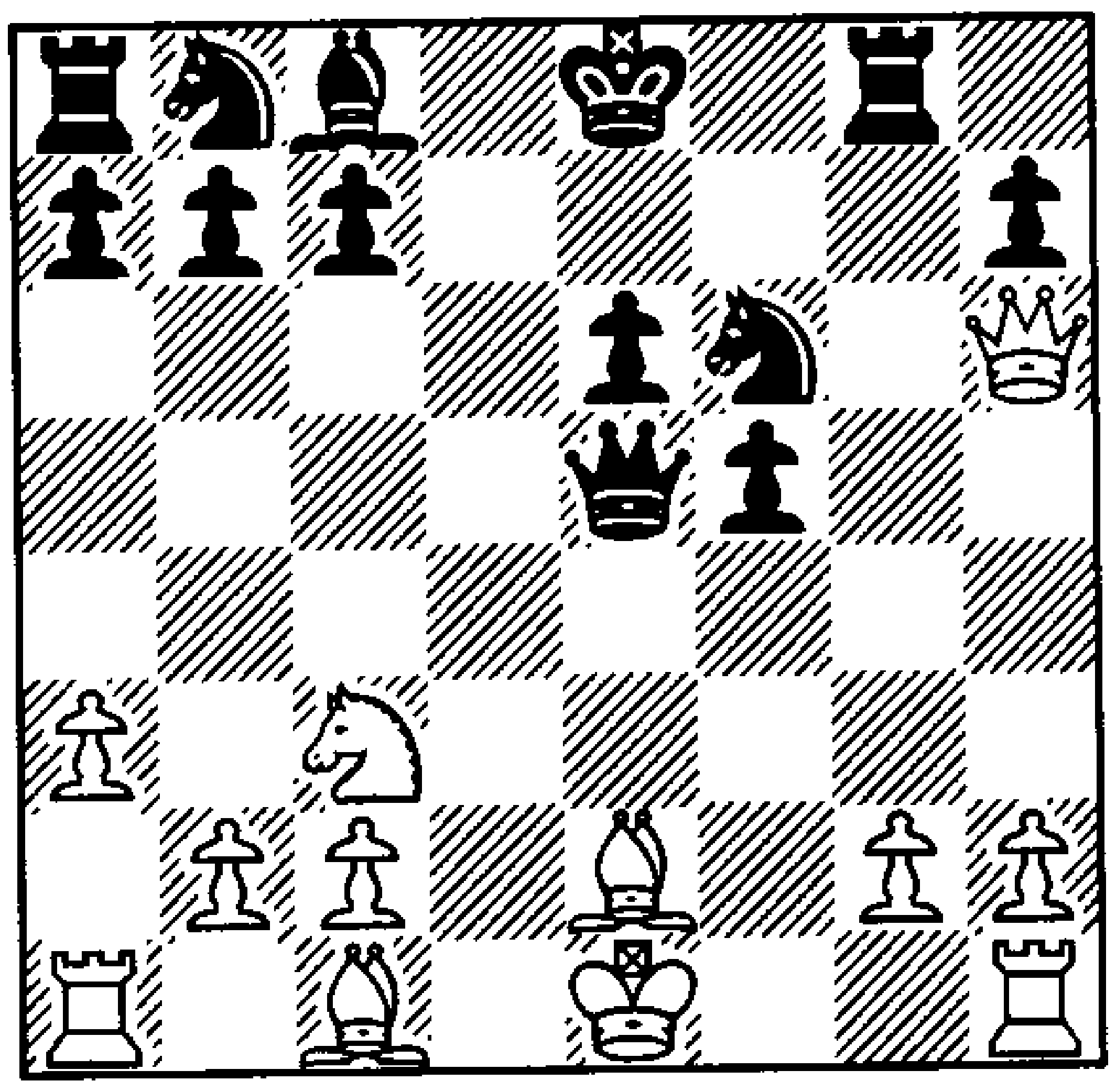
Evidently inferior was 9...♘c6?! 10 ♘b5! ♕e4+ 11 ♗e3! or 9...♕d7?! 10 ♗f4 ♘f6 11 ♖d1 ♕f7 12 ♘b5! ♘a6 13 ♗xc7 0-0 14 ♗e5 with a strong initiative for the pawn.

10 ♕xg7 ♕e5+

For some reason Alekhine attaches a question mark to this move, recommending 10...♖g8 11 ♕xc7 ♘c6, when 'there would not be a win for White by means of 12 ♘b5 because of 12...♕h4+ 13 g3 ♕e4+ 14 ♔f2 ♕xc2+ followed by ...♘e4.' On the other hand, after 12 ♗f4! Black's position is clearly worse, whereas after the move in the game all is still not so clear.

11 ♗e2 ♖g8 (if 11...♘g4?! Kmoch gives 12 ♕g5 ♘c6 13 ♗f4, although there is also 12 ♕xe5 ♘xe5 13 ♗f4) **12 ♕h6**

Thanks to his two bishops, the weakness of the dark squares in the opponent's position and the rather unsettled state of the enemy king, White has highly promising compensation for the pawn.



12...♖g6

An important moment. The capture 12...♖xg2 is refuted not by 13 ♗f4?! ♕d4 14 ♗e3 ♕e5 15 0-0-0 (Kmoch) in view of the unclear 15...♖g6 16 ♕h3 ♘c6 17 ♖he1 ♗d7, but only with a continuation not suggested by anyone: 13 ♗g5! ♘bd7 (13...♘e4?! 14 ♗h5+ ♔d7 15 0-0-0+ ♔c6 16 ♗f3 ♖f2 17 ♗f6 wins) 14 0-0-0 etc.

13 ♕h4 ♗d7

Now 13...♖xg2? is bad because of 14 ♗f4 – 14...♖xe2+ (14...♕d4 15 ♖d1) 15 ♘xe2 ♕xb2 16 ♖d1 ♘bd7 17 ♖g1 and White wins.

But 13...♖g4!? would have given Black definite counterplay: 14 ♕f2 (14 ♕h3 ♘c6 15 0-0 ♖g7; 14 ♕h6 ♖g6) 14...♘e4!? (instead of 14...♘c6 15 0-0 ♖g7 16 ♗f4 ♕d4 17 ♗e3 ♕e5 18 ♖ad1 ♘g4 19 ♗xg4 ♖xg4 20 ♖fe1 with the initiative for White) 15 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 16 ♕f3 ♘c6 17 ♕h5+ ♔d7 18 c3 f4 19 ♕xh7+ ♘e7 20 ♔d1 ♕d5+ 21 ♗d2 ♖xe2 22 ♔xe2 ♕xg2+ 23 ♔d3 e5 24 ♖hg1 ♕d5+ 25

♔c2 ♔d6. The variation is, of course, a hypothetical one, but it is more or less representative.

14 ♗g5! ♗c6?

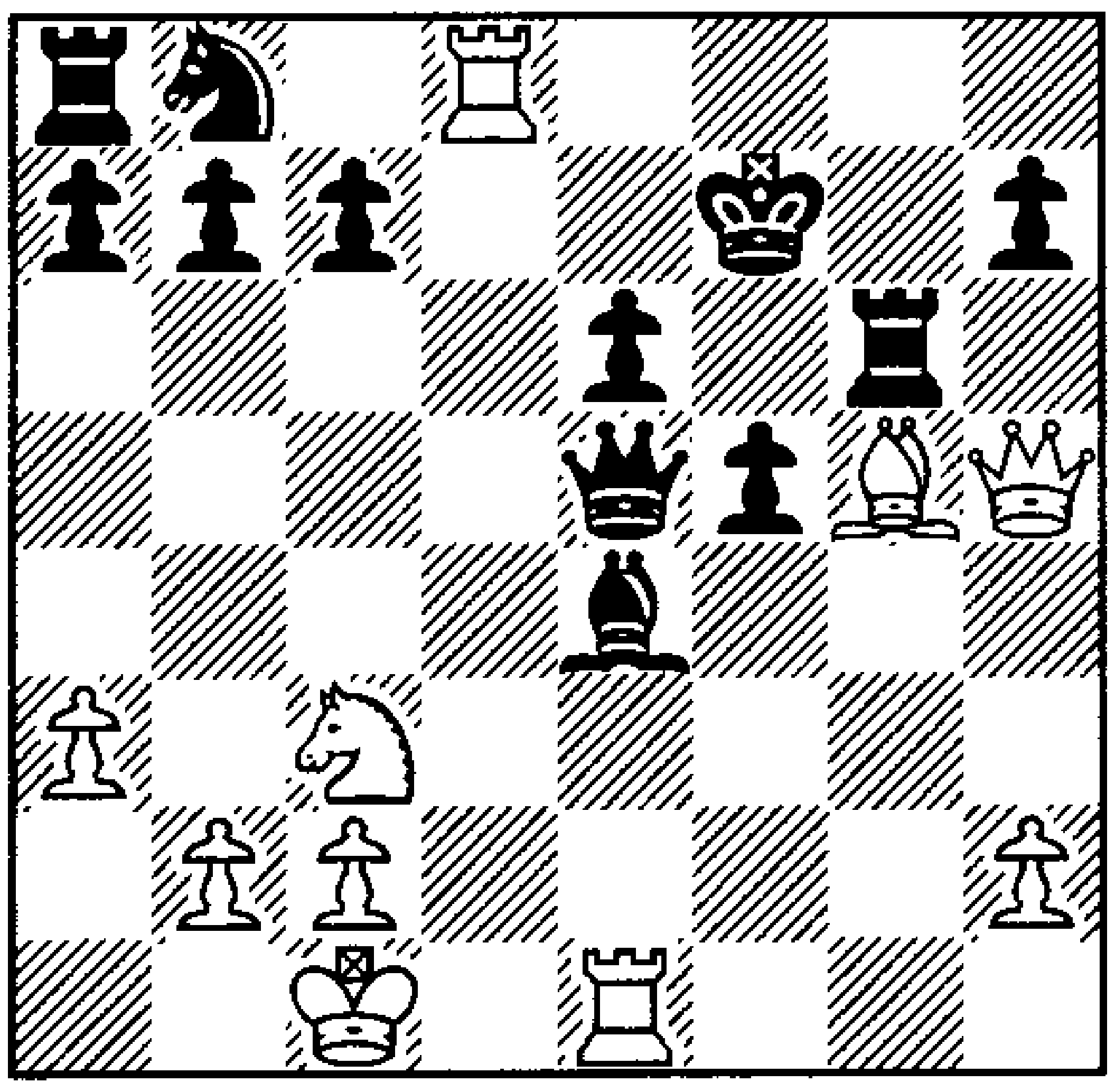
The decisive mistake: after the opponent's reply the black king is stuck in the centre and there is nothing more to comment on.

Essential was 14...♘c6 (but not 14...h6? 15 ♗f4! ♕c5 16 ♗h5) 15 0-0-0 0-0-0 16 ♗h5 (or 16 ♖he1!? h6! 17 ♗xh6 ♘g4! 18 ♗xg4 ♖xg4 19 ♕xg4 fxg4 20 ♖xe5 ♘xe5 with approximate equality) 16...♘xh5!? (Kmoch's idea 16...♖xg5 17 ♕xg5 ♖g8 is refuted by 18 ♕d2!) 17 ♗xd8 f4 18 ♗e7 ♕f5 19 ♖d2 ♖g4 20 ♕f2 ♘xe7 21 ♕xa7 ♘c6 22 ♕a8+ ♘b8 23 ♖xd7 ♔xd7 24 ♕xb8 ♖xg2 25 ♖d1+ ♔c6 26 ♕e8+ ♔b6 27 ♕a4 ♘f6 28 ♕b4+ ♔c6 29 ♕c4+ ♔b6 with a draw.

15 0-0-0! ♗xg2

With such a king, Black is already obliged to take risks. If 15...♘bd7, then 16 ♖he1 ♗e4 (16...0-0-0 17 ♗h5 ♖xg5 18 ♖xe5 ♖xh5 19 ♕d4 wins) 17 ♗h5 ♘xh5 18 ♕xh5 ♘f6 (18...♘f8 19 g4) 19 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 20 ♘xe4 fxe4 21 ♕b5+!

16 ♖he1 ♗e4 17 ♗h5 ♘xh5 18 ♖d8+ ♔f7 19 ♕xh5 1-0



19...♔g7 20 ♘xe4 fxe4 21 ♗h6+ and ♕xe5. 'This was, I believe, the shortest defeat in Nimzowitsch's career.' (Alekhine)

And not surprisingly: in this game the 'great Aron' was forced to try and solve problems that were completely abhorrent to him. He was accustomed to thinking in terms of points and other positional categories, manoeuvring, fencing with a musketeer's sword – and here, in violation of all 'proprieties', he was simply bludgeoned! Not without reason, on standing up from the board, did poor Nimzowitsch exclaim in a fit of temper: 'He deals with us like inexperienced fledglings.'

After also losing to the champion in the second half of the tournament, the author of *My System* at last found an explanation for his opponent's fantastic successes: 'Alekhine hypnotises us all!' A familiar story: thirty years earlier this had been said about Lasker, and thirty years later, also after a triumph in Bled – about Tal...

In fact it was with something else that Alekhine succeeded. He was the first who could play material down for a long time as though nothing had happened. Chigorin also played this way a little, but he did it more spontaneously, intuitively, whereas Alekhine did it quite deliberately! He would sacrifice material for some, at times unclear compensation, and through lack of familiarity his opponents would usually be unable to comprehend the situation and would begin to 'drift'.

Not without reason did Alekhine's manner of play not appeal to Fischer – a player of classical style, who did not like giving up material 'just like that'. The forcible disruption of the balance irritated Fischer! But for Alekhine it was the norm – to give up a couple of pawns (as in the game with Nimzowitsch) or even a piece, but to gain a strong initiative. In contrast to his colleagues, he knew fairly precisely in which position it should all work out, and in which it would not.

'In Alekhine's play,' wrote Tartakower, 'one is struck not so much by the *genius* and not so much by the *well-considered* nature of his play, but rather the ideal combination of these two, apparently rather incompatible elements: well-considered genius! And for universality of style

Alekhine has no rivals, since whereas Philidor mainly constructs pawn chains, Morphy attacks the king, Steinitz aims for methodicalness, Lasker for flexibility, and Capablanca for logicality, Alekhine, in contrast to all these champions, seeks *a struggle as such.*'

In 1932 the world champion won a further two quite strong tournaments – in London (1. Alekhine – 9 out of 11; 2. Flohr – 8) and in Bern (1. Alekhine – 12½ out of 15; 2-3. Flohr and Euwe – 11½; 4. Sultan Khan – 11; 5-6. Bernstein and Bogoljubow – 10 etc.). A fly in the ointment was caused by a sensational open letter by Spielmann 'I accuse!', which talked about the part played by Alekhine in Capablanca not being invited to San Remo and Bled, and Nimzowitsch and Spielmann to London and Bern. If only the author had known how the champions' 'powers' would expand during the times of Botvinnik and Karpov! And what do you think, was Capablanca a party to the non-invitation of Lasker to New York 1927? Alas, regarding this, Spielmann, who was a participant in that tournament, keeps silent...

In the autumn the champion set off an a 'round-the-world trip' lasting several months and in 1933 he played only in a small tournament in Paris (+7 =2) and in the Olympiad in Folkestone (+8 -1 =3), but on the other hand he gave hundreds of successful simultaneous displays and beat the 1925 world records for blindfold play – his own (28 boards) and that of Réti (28), by playing 32 games simultaneously (+19 -4 =9) at the world exhibition in Chicago. America applauded!

Early in 1934, scoring +4 =5 in Hastings, he finished half a point behind the 25-year-old Czech grandmaster Salo Flohr, who a month before this had drawn a match (6-6) with another rising star of world chess – the 22-year-old USSR champion Mikhail Botvinnik. These were the first, as yet altogether imperceptible signs of the coming changes at the summit of chess...

The champion immediately compensated for this comparative failure, firstly, by marrying the respectable 58-year-old American Grace Wishart (in Paris they joked that Alekhine had married Philidor's widow), then by his victory in the 'return match' with Bogoljubow, and finally by his triumph in the super-tournament Zürich 1934: 1. Alekhine – 13 out of 15; 2-3. Flohr and Euwe – 12; 4. Bogoljubow – 11½; 5. Lasker – 10; 6-7. Bernstein and Nimzowitsch – 9 etc.

Particular intrigue was imparted to this tournament by the participation of Lasker, who had not played in any competitions for nine years. For Alekhine this meeting with the legendary figure was of crucial significance: he had finished behind him both 20 years earlier in St Petersburg, and 10 years earlier in New York, so that it was time to settle the account, especially with the white pieces.

I should like to preface this duel with an interesting opinion by Fischer: 'Alekhine is a player I've never really understood. He always wanted a superior centre; he manoeuvred his pieces toward the kingside, and around the 25th move, began to mate his opponent. He disliked exchanges, preferring to play with many pieces on the board. His play was fantastically complicated, more so than any player before or since. Alekhine once beat Lasker in about 23 [actually 26] moves; his pieces converged on the kingside, and the game ended with a sudden death blow.'

Game 140

A.Alekhine-Em.Lasker

Zürich 1934

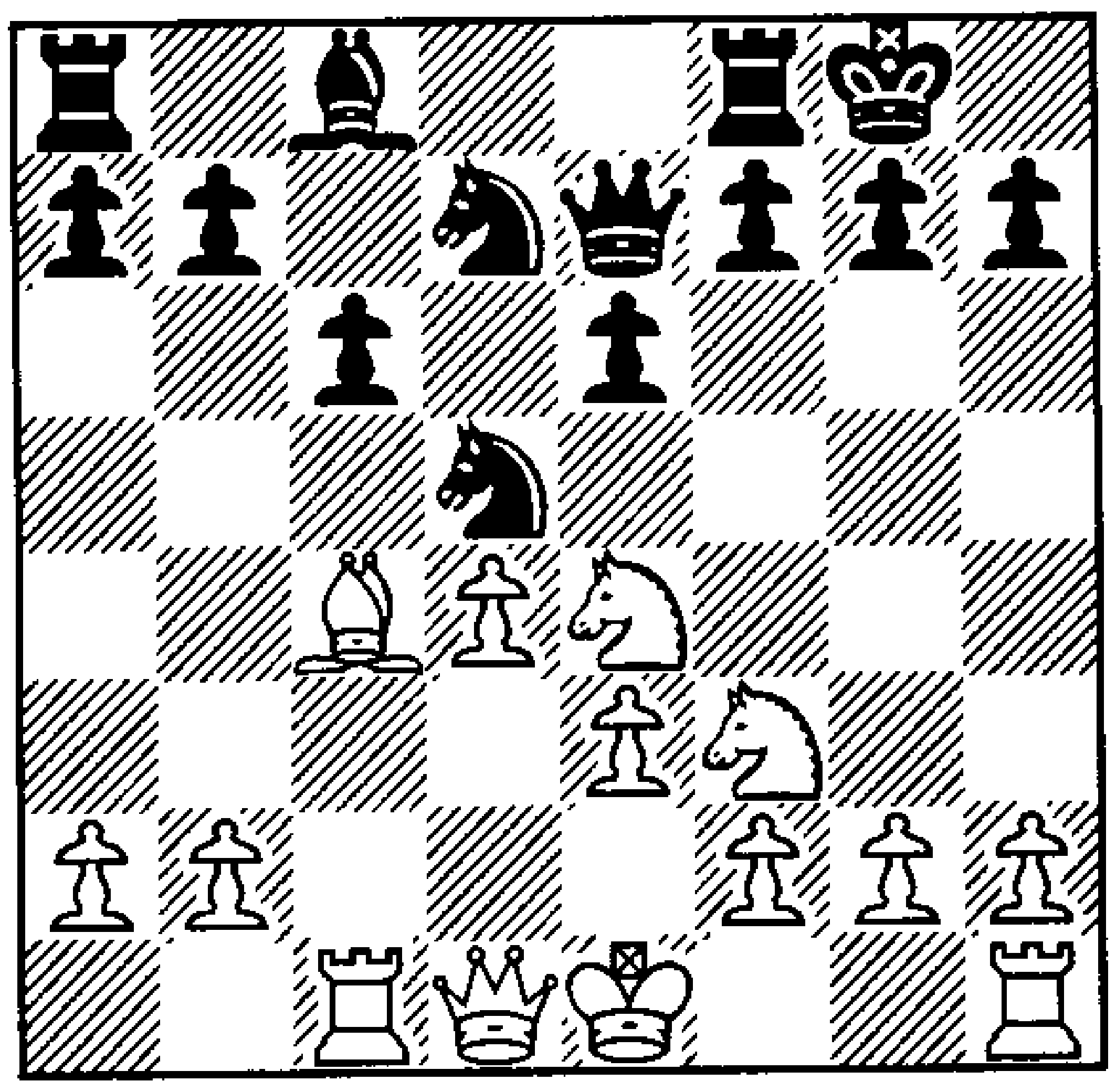
Queen's Gambit D67

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 ♗e7 5 ♗g5 ♘bd7 6 e3 0-0 7 ♖c1 c6 8 ♗d3 dxc4

The inclusion of 8...h6 9 ♗h4 in the event of 9...dxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♘d5 11 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 12 0-0 ♘xc3 13 ♖xc3 e5 (13...b6!?) 14 ♗b3! exd4 15 exd4 ♘f6 16 ♖e1 ♕d6 17 ♘e5! is to White's advantage (Karpov-Yusupov, London 7th matchgame 1989; it is curious that this position arose from a Lasker Defence).

9 ♗xc4 ♘d5 10 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 11 ♘e4

Alekhine's invention against the Capablanca Variation. The Cuban himself (in games with A. Steiner at Budapest 1928 and Kan at Moscow 1935) chose the main line – 11 0-0, but after 11...♘xc3 12 ♖xc3 e5 White has no advantage.



11...♘5f6 12 ♘g3 e5

'An interesting attempt by Lasker to solve swiftly the problem of the queen's bishop. Capablanca regularly played 12...♕b4+ here in our matchgames and after the exchange of queens (*13 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 14 ♔xd2 ♖d8 Game No. 127; 14...c5! – G. K.*), succeeded in drawing, but not without difficulties.' (Alekhine)

13 0-0 exd4 14 ♘f5

14 ♕xd4 ♘b6 15 ♗b3 ♗e6 is harmless. According to Alekhine, 14 exd4 ♘b6 15 ♖e1 ♕d6 16 ♗b3 is more energetic, and if 16...♗g4, then 17 h3! ♗xf3 18 ♕xf3, sacrificing the d4-pawn for the sake of a strong attack: 18...♕xd4?! 19 ♘f5 etc. But after 16...♘bd5! Black has a comfortable game.

14...♕d8 15 ♘3xd4 (here too after 15 ♕xd4 or 15 exd4 Black equalises by 15...♘b6) **15...♘e5 16 ♗b3 ♗xf5 17 ♘xf5 ♕b6?**

Here is where it tells that Lasker was never an openings expert and relied almost exclusively on common sense! It required only one accurate move of Black – 17...g6!, and the position would have become a dead draw: 18 ♕d4 (18 ♕d6 ♖e8!; 18 ♘d6 or 18 ♘d4 – 18...♕e7) 18...♕xd4 19 ♘xd4 ♖ad8 (Euwe-Flohr, Nottingham 1936).

18 ♕d6!

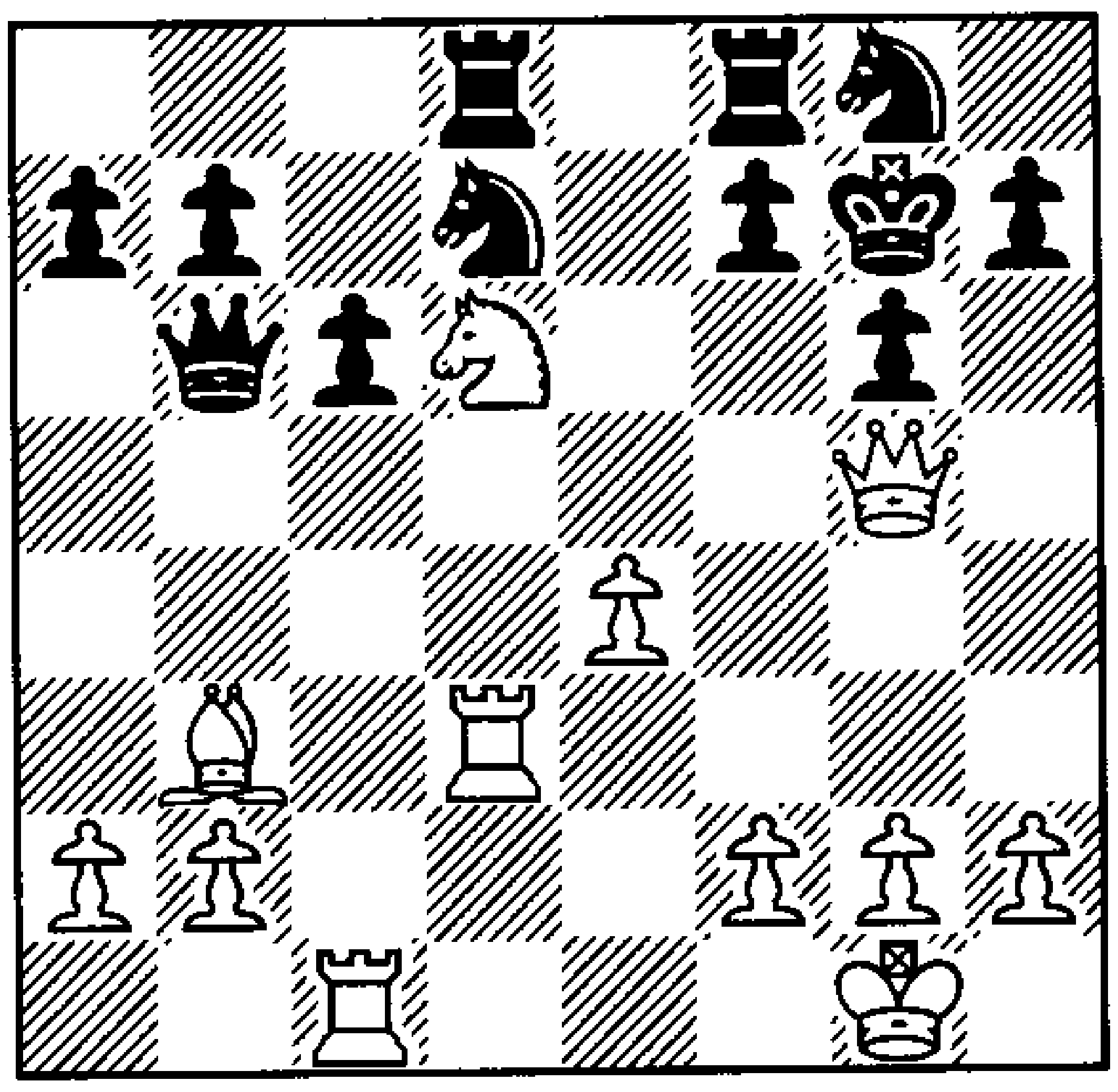
The former world champion either underestimated or overlooked this terrible thrust, after which Black's game immediately goes downhill.

18...♘ed7 (also bad is 18...♘g6 19 ♘h6+ gxh6 20 ♕xf6 ♕d8 21 ♕c3) **19 ♖fd1 ♖ad8 20 ♕g3 g6 21 ♕g5!**

'With the main threat 22 ♖d6. Black has already no real defence.' (Alekhine)

21...♔h8 22 ♘d6 ♔g7 23 e4! (clearing the third rank for the rook) **23...♘g8 24 ♖d3!**

With the threat of 25 ♖f3.



24...f6

There would have been an equally spectacular finish after 24...h6 25 ♘f5+ ♔h7 26 ♘xh6! f6 27 ♘f5 fxg5 28 ♖h3+ ♘h6 29 ♖xh6 mate.

25 ♘f5+ ♔h8 26 ♕xg6!! 1-0

A stunning blow! In view of 26...hxg6 27 ♖h3+ ♘h6 28 ♖xh6 mate, Black resigned.

It is well known that 13 is the lucky number of the 13th world champion, but I was surprised to learn that the fourth champion also had such a number, only... twice as big! This is the evidence of Flohr: 'Alekhine considered twice the "devil's dozen" – the number "26" to be lucky for him. Once he bet on this number in roulette and won. The date of his marriage to Grace Wishart was 26 March, his second match with Bogoljubow lasted 26 games, and his memorable win over Lasker was in 26 moves! Well, Alekhine wasn't the last world champion to believe in omens...'

At the closing banquet Alekhine expressed his profound admiration for Lasker and called him his teacher... Although he brilliantly won Zürich 1934, the champion nevertheless lost one game – to the Dutchman Max Euwe. That was one more barely audible warning bell. If you have ears, you should listen! Alas... 'Whom God wishes to destroy, he first makes mad.'

Dutch Heights

Towards the end of 1935 something incredible happened in Holland: Euwe won his match against Alekhine – 15½-14½ (+9 -8 =13) and took the world crown from him! I will give the details of this drama in the chapter about the fifth world champion, and here I will merely say that initially it appeared that the Russian star's new opponent would suffer the same fate as Bogoljubow.

Alekhine immediately took the lead – 1-0, 3-1. Especially impressive was his win in the fourth game, where he again displayed his extraordinary imagination.

Often in the games of the former champions we see archaic techniques, the slow development of events and seemingly naïve 'little ruses'. Well, every chess era had its values. But the greatest masters sometimes made breakthroughs into the future, demonstrating bold ideas that were ahead of their time. That was the case in this game.

Game 141
M.Euwe-A.Alekhine
World Championship Match,
Holland 1935, 4th game
Grünfeld Defence D81

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♕b3

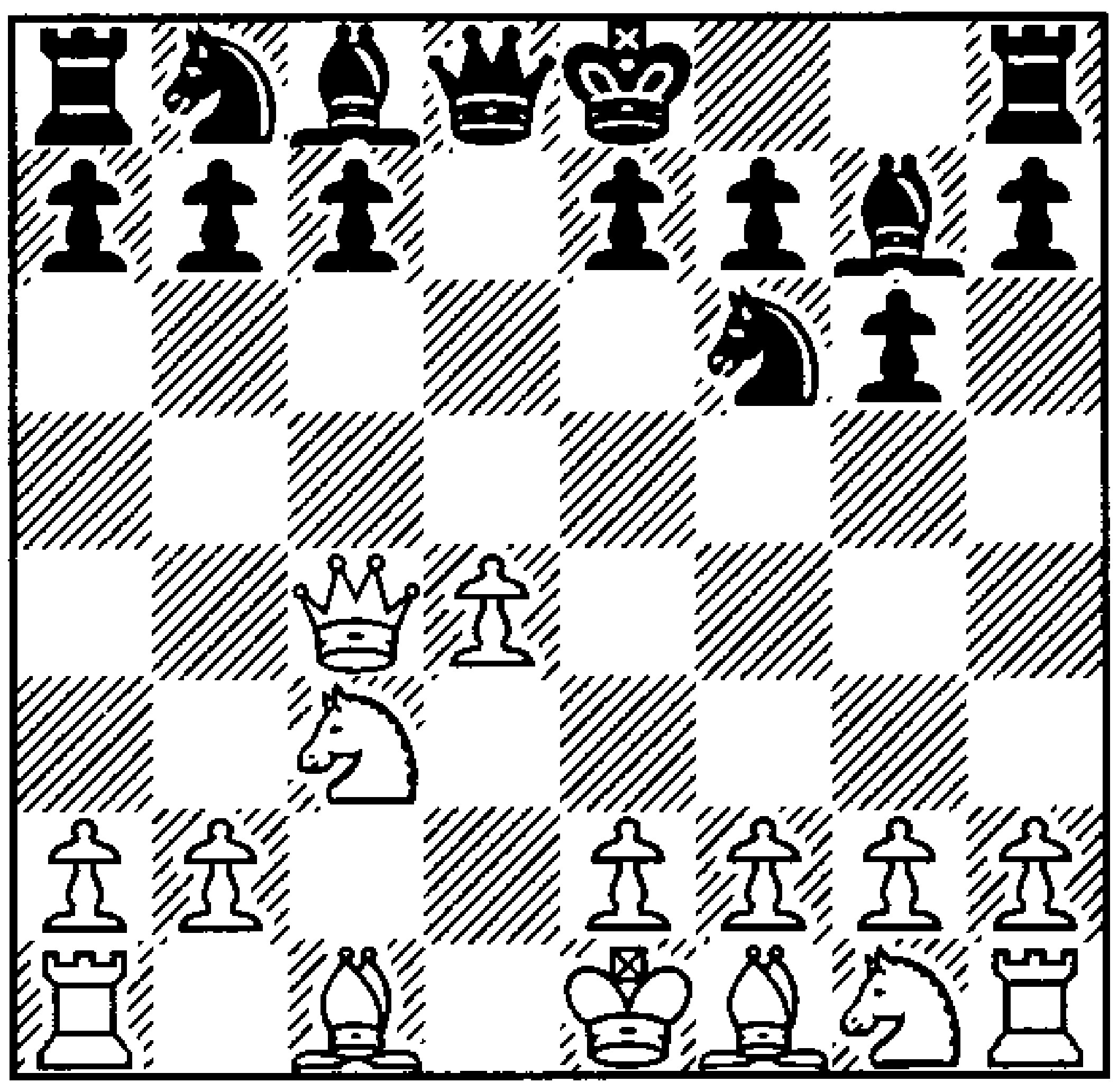
Euwe was well informed about the ideas of Soviet masters – it was not for nothing that he played a training tournament with them (1934). A year earlier in the 8th USSR Championship the young Botvinnik had used 4 ♕b3 to defeat Levenfish, and the latter then used it in Moscow 1935 against Flohr and Spielmann.

The first theoretical steps of the new opening! Life has shown that the most dangerous for Black (apart from 4 cxd5) is the variation 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 ♕b3!, following the example of the source game Ragozin-Romanovsky (Leningrad 1932).

4...dxc4 5 ♕xc4 ♗g7

'Also playable is 5...♗e6 6 ♕b5+ ♘c6 7 ♘f3, but now not 7...♖b8 (as in the 2nd matchgame, 1935) but 7...♘d5! etc., with fairly good counter-chances.' (Alekhine) Indeed, in the game Alekhine refers after 7...♖b8 8 ♘e5 (according to Euwe, 8 e4 a6 9 ♕d3 ♗g4 10 d5 ♗xf3 11 gxf3 ♘e5 12 ♕d1 is also strong) 8...♗d7 9 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 10 d5 White gained the advantage. But 7...♘d5 also does not equalise in view of 8 e4 ♘db4 9 ♕a4 ♗d7 10 ♕d1 e5 11 a3 exd4 12 ♘b1 ♘a6 13 b4, as was shown in the late 1930s, and then also in the game Petrosian-Benko (Los Angeles 1963).

More topical now is 6...♗d7!? 7 ♕b3 ♘c6 8 ♘f3 ♗g7 9 e4 0-0 10 h3 ♖b8 11 ♗e3 b5 with a double-edged game, or 7 ♕xb7 ♘c6!? 8 e3 ♖b8 9 ♕a6 ♘b4 10 ♕e2 c5 with compensation for the pawn.



6 ♗f4

In the 12th game Euwe chose 6 e4 0-0 7 ♘f3!, and this position became one of the *tabiyas* of the 20th century (it will be mentioned further in the second volume).

6...c6 7 ♖d1?!

Here too 7 ♘f3 0-0 8 e4 is more active, for example: 8...b5 9 ♕b3 ♕a5 10 ♗d3 ♗e6 11 ♕d1 ♖d8 12 0-0 ♗g4 13 e5 ♘d5 14 ♘xd5 cxd5 15 ♖c1! (Miles-Kasparov, Basel 2nd matchgame 1986), or 8...♕a5 9 b4 ♕d8 10 ♖b1 (10 ♖d1!?) 10...b5 11 ♕d3 a5 12 a3 (Khalifman-Leko, Budapest 3rd matchgame 2000) – in both cases White emerged from the opening with the better game.

7...♕a5 8 ♗d2 b5?

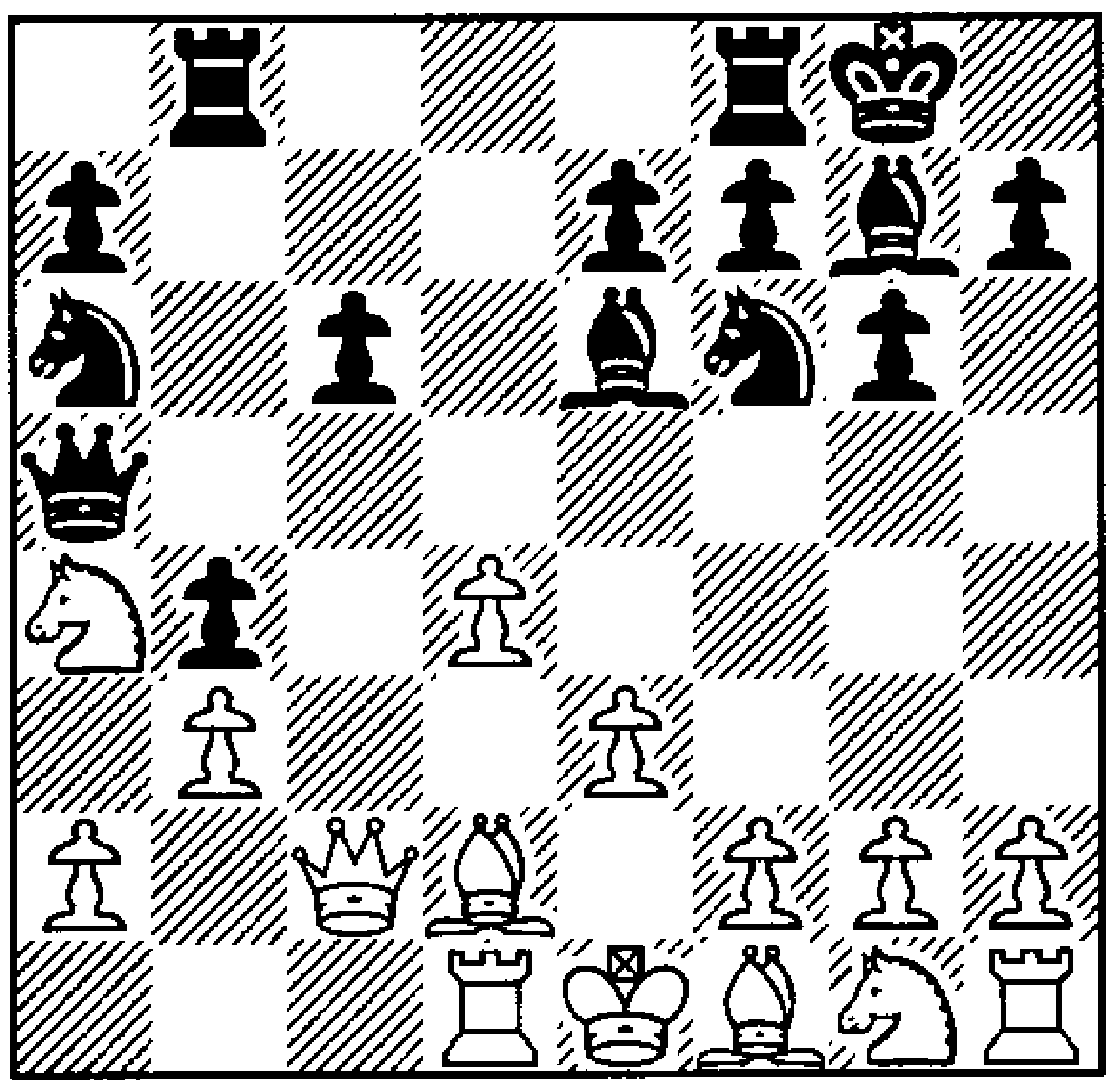
An error in reply. 'There are some moves of mine in the first Euwe match which I actually simply cannot understand. Neither before nor since have I played such decidedly unsound chess, especially in the openings! The simple 8...♕b6 9 ♗c1 ♗f5 followed by ...0-0 would have secured Black a distinct advantage in development.' (Alekhine)

9 ♕b3 b4 (preventing e2-e4, but at what a price!) **10 ♘a4 ♘a6 11 e3 ♗e6**

If 11...0-0 the champion did not like 12 ♗c4! (but not 12 ♗xa6?! ♗xa6 13 ♗xb4 ♕b5 or 13 ♕xb4 ♕d5).

12 ♕c2 0-0 13 b3! (dangerous is 13 ♕xc6?! ♘c7 with the threat of 14...♗d7 or 14...♗xa2)

13...♖ab8



From the viewpoint of the classical school, Black's opening play has been an abomination: he has a weak, isolated pawn at c6, a 'bad' knight at a6, and insufficient control of the centre. Alekhine was counting on the latent energy in Black's position, but after his mistake on the eighth move his task has become significantly more difficult. However, it only requires White to dally slightly, and an explosion can follow!

14 ♗d3

'Because of his slightly belated development White decides not to take the c-pawn – and rightly so; after 14 ♕xc6 ♗c8! the open c-file would become a dangerous weapon in Black's hands – for instance, 15 ♘f3 ♗b7 16 ♕c2 ♖fc8 17 ♕b1 ♘e4, eventually followed by ...♘c3 etc..' (Alekhine) 14 ♗xa6!? ♕xa6 15 ♘c5 was tempting, but Euwe did not want to exchange his important light-squared bishop for the weak knight at a6. His classical outlook demanded that he should seriously punish his opponent for his 'anti-positional play'.

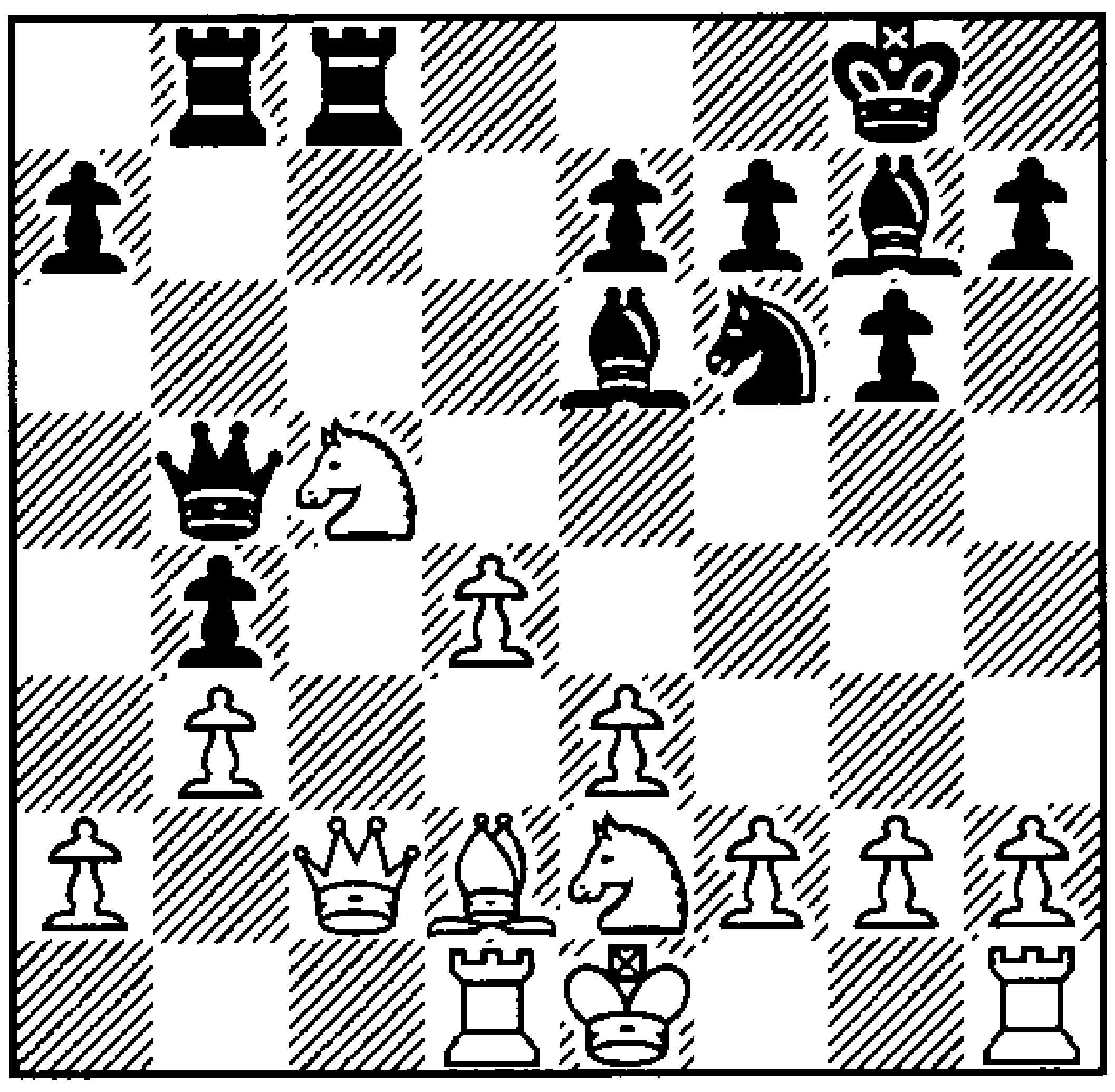
14...♖fc8 15 ♘e2?!

'Obviously underestimating the value of the following pawn offer; otherwise he would have continued with 15 ♗xa6 ♕xa6 16 ♘c5 ♕b5 17 ♘f3! (*17 ♘xe6?! fxe6 18 ♘f3 c5! – G. K.*) 17...♘d7 18 ♖c1 etc. with the better endgame prospects.' (Alekhine)

15...c5!

The genie is released from the bottle! Moreover, this is not a gesture of despair, as it might have seemed to Euwe, but 'an absolutely correct combination, which would have given – against White's best defence – easy equality.' (Alekhine)

16 ♗xa6 ♕xa6 17 ♘xc5 ♕b5

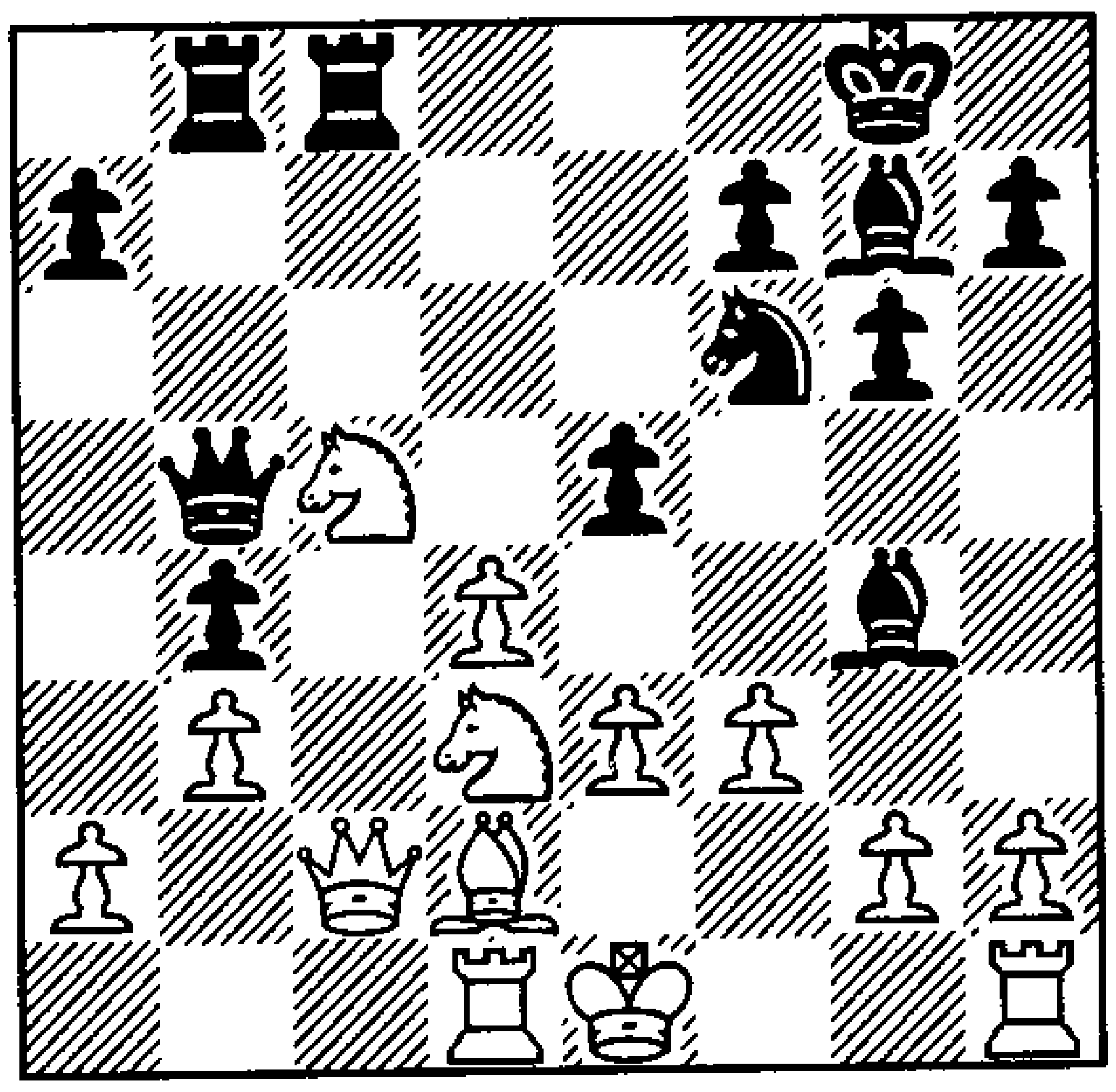


18 ♘f4?

Another error – and a hurricane breaks out! 'My opponent, fortunately for me, underestimated the danger. The correct defence consisted in 18 e4! ♘d7 (*but not 18...♗g4?! 19 ♗f4!, for example: 19...e5 20 ♗xe5 ♘xe4 21 ♗xb8 ♘xc5 22 dxc5 ♗xe2 23 ♕xe2 ♖e8 24 ♗e5! – G. K.*) 19 ♗e3 ♗xd4 20 ♘xd4 ♕xc5 21 ♕xc5 ♘xc5 etc., with a probable draw as a result.' (Alekhine) Also interesting is 19...♗g4!? 20 f3 e5! 21 fxg4 exd4 22 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 23 ♘xd4 ♕xc5 24 0-0 (or 24 ♕xc5 ♘xc5) 24...♘e5 25 ♕xc5 ♖xc5, again with approximate equality.

18...♗g4! 19 f3 (or 19 ♖c1 e5!) **19...e5!** (a powerful blow against White's foundations) **20 ♘fd3**

20 fxg4 exf4 was no better.



20...exd4!!

'A pretty and exactly calculated piece offer.' (Alekhine) Open lines are more important than material: the white king is caught in the centre!

21 fxg4 (21 exd4 ♘d5!; 21 e4 ♘d7 etc.) **21...dxe3 22 ♗xe3?**

Mistakes come in pairs... 'A comparatively more difficult variation for Black was 22 ♗xb4 ♘d5 23 a3 (*23 a4? ♘xb4 – G. K.*) 23...a5 24 ♕c4! axb4! 25 ♕xd5 bxa3 26 ♖f1 (or 26 b4 ♗c3+ followed by 27...♗xb4) 26...a2! 27 ♖xf7 (*? – G. K.*) 27...♗c3+ 28 ♔e2 ♖xc5 and wins.' (Alekhine)

'More difficult' is not the word! In my opinion, after 27 ♔e2! White's position is not at all worse and the only question is whether there is some compensation for the material deficit (27...♖c7 etc.). Therefore instead of 23...a5?! more promising is 23...e2! 24 ♖c1 ♕c6! 25 ♗d2 ♖e8 and the extra piece does not guarantee the safety of White's king.

22...♘xg4 23 ♗f4

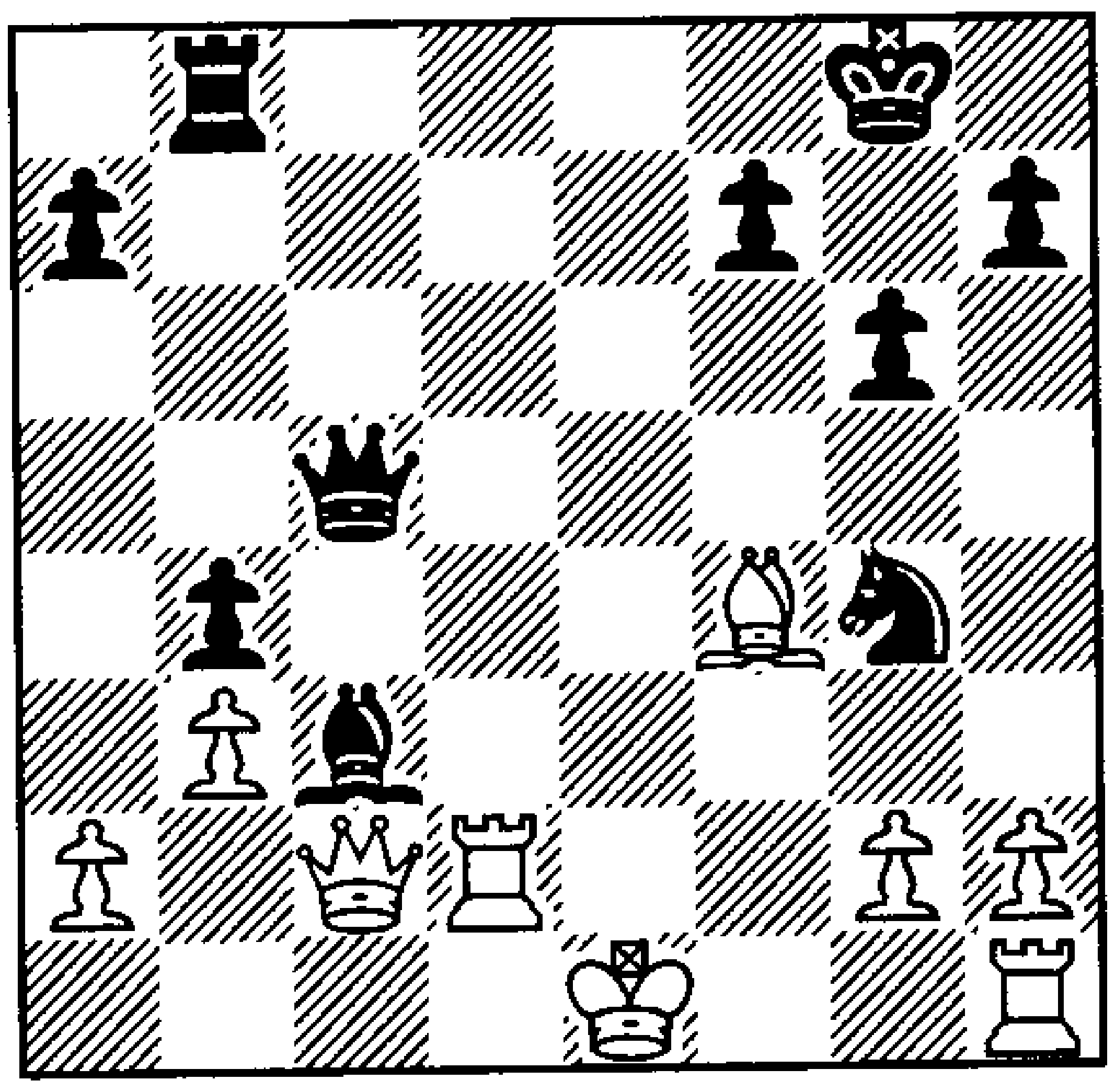
'Anything else was equally unsatisfactory – for instance: 23 ♗g1 ♗c3+ (*23...♖e8+!? 24 ♔f1 ♖b6! – G. K.*) 24 ♔f1 ♖b6, or 23 ♗f2 ♗c3+ 24 ♔f1 ♖c6! 25 ♔g1 ♘xf2 26 ♕xf2 ♖d8 etc., with a winning position.' (Alekhine)

23...♗c3+ 24 ♖d2

Sadly necessary. After 24 ♔e2 ♖xc5 25 ♗xb8 ♕e8+ 26 ♗e5 ♖xe5+ 27 ♘xe5 ♕xe5+ 28 ♔f3 (28 ♔f1 ♘e3+) it all ends with an immediate mate: 28...♕e3+! 29 ♔xg4 h5+ 30 ♔h4 ♗f6 mate.

24...♖xc5 25 ♘xc5 (25 ♗xb8 ♕e8+!) **25...♕xc5**

'A shorter way to victory was 25...♖e8+! with the following main variation: 26 ♘e4 (*26 ♔d1 ♗xd2 27 ♗xd2 ♘f2+ – G. K.*) 26...f5 (*26...♗xd2+!? 27 ♔xd2 ♕f5! – G. K.*) 27 ♔d1 ♖xe4 28 ♖d8+ ♔f7 29 ♗g5 f4! 30 ♔c1 ♖e2 31 ♕d3 ♕xg5! and wins.' (Alekhine)



26 ♗xb8

The variation 26 ♔f1 ♖e8 would have gladdened chess humanists: there is no reasonable defence against the threat of 27...♕f2+!! 28 ♖xf2 ♖e1 mate (27 ♕c1 ♗xd2! or 27 g3 ♕c6 and mate).

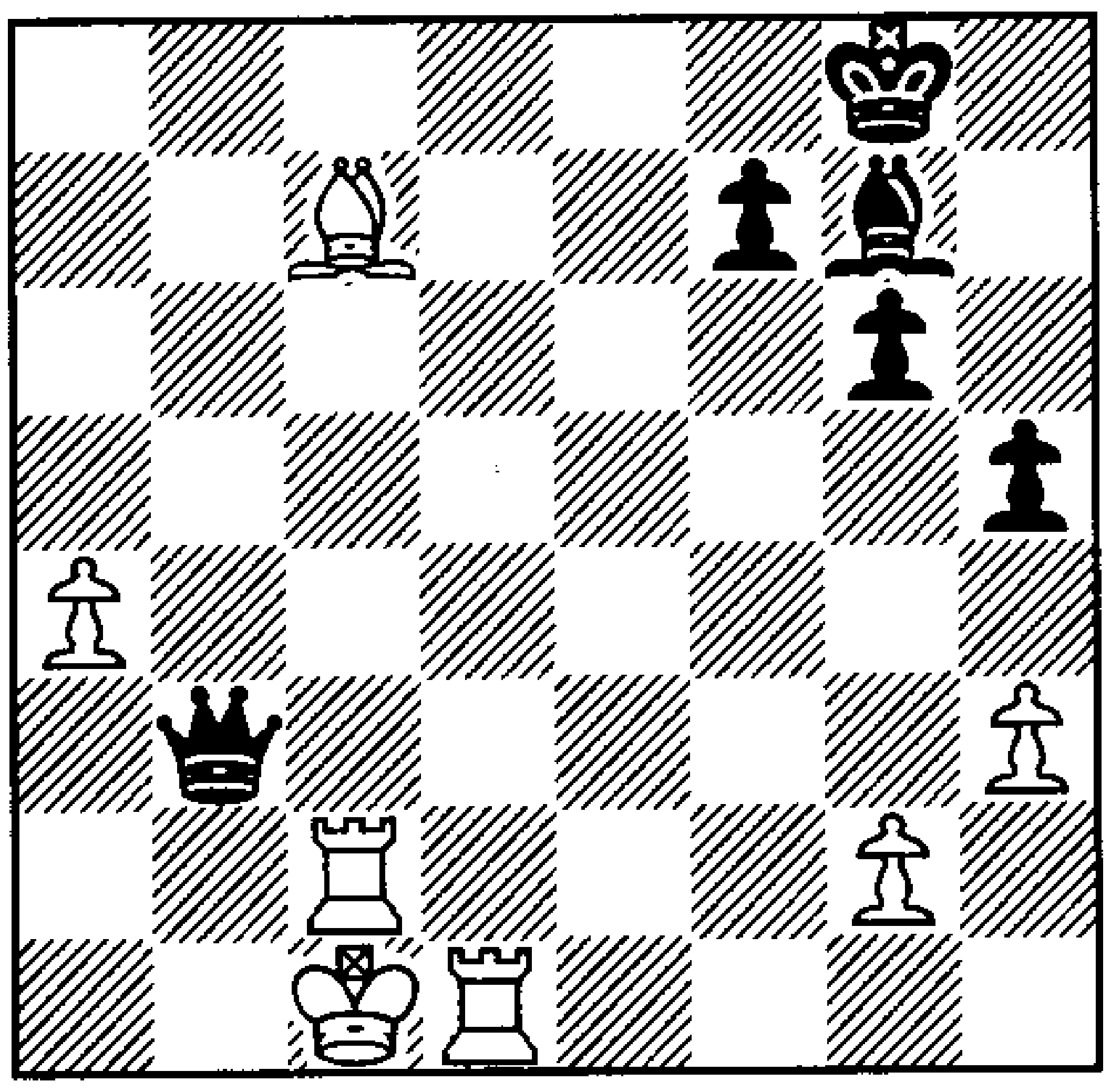
26...♕e7+ 27 ♔d1 ♘e3+ 28 ♔c1 ♘xc2 29 ♖xc2

Through these exchanges it would appear that White has avoided the worst and that he is left with an acceptable material balance. But, alas, this position is completely hopeless for him: because of the open position of his king, the unwieldy rooks are unable to cope with the nimble black queen.

29...h5! (a long escape square – according to Alekhine, a necessary preparation for the next move) **30 ♖d1 ♗g7!**

Reminding White of his Achilles' heel – the weakness of the dark squares and the long diagonal.

31 h3 a5 (31...♕g5+!?) **32 ♗f4** (the hapless bishop is quite unable to find itself a safe square) **32...♕e4 33 ♗c7 ♕e3+ 34 ♔b1 a4!** (not a moment's peace for the white king!) **35 bxa4** (there is nothing else) **35...b3 36 axb3 ♕xb3+ 37 ♔c1**



37...♗h6+?!

Very human! Alekhine makes no comment on this moment: in time-trouble he simply picks up the exchange and goes into a technically won endgame. But the machine immediately points out a pretty forced win with 'computer geometry': 37...♕e3+ 38 ♔b1 (38 ♖dd2 ♕e1+ 39 ♖d1 ♗h6+; 38 ♖cd2 ♕c3+ 39 ♔b1 ♕xc7) 38...♕a3! and White loses at least his bishop on c7.

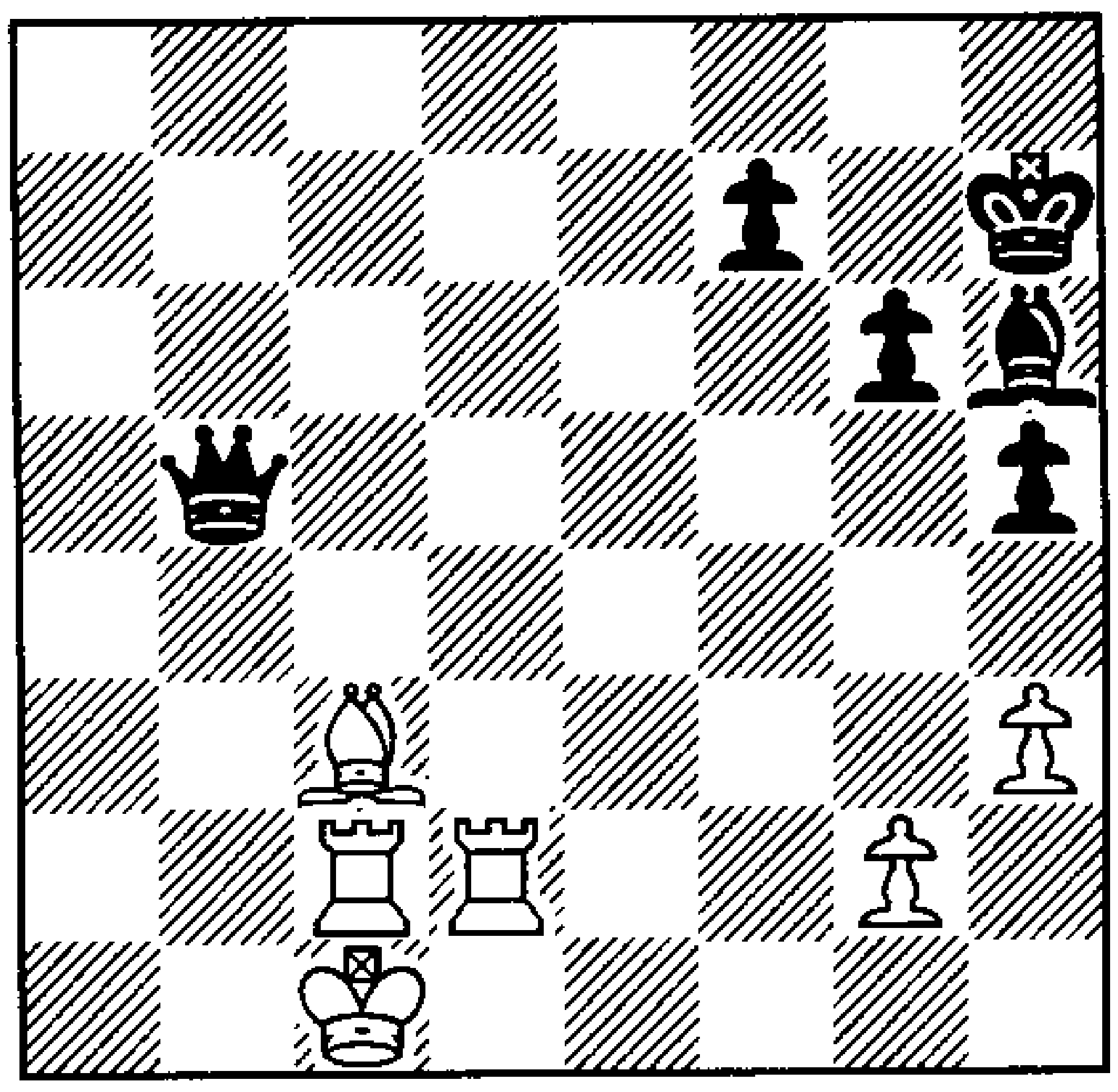
38 ♖dd2 ♕xa4 39 ♗e5 (the resistance would have been prolonged somewhat by 39 ♔d1 ♗xd2 40 ♔xd2 ♕e4! 41 ♔c1 ♕e1+ with the gradual advance of the kingside pawns)

39...♔h7 40 ♗c3?!

Also a typically human mistake! After 40 ♗b2! ♕e4 41 ♔d1 ♗xd2 42 ♖xd2 g5 White could still have still have floundered on a little in a protracted, hopeless endgame. But in the time scramble Euwe did not see the difference between the two bishop moves.

40...♕b5!

This is the point: by preventing 41 ♔d1 Black drives his opponent into a zugzwang! Now any move leads to loss of material.



41 ♗d4

'If 41 ♗a1, then 41...♕f1+ followed by ...♗g7+ etc..' (Alekhine) And in the event of 41 h4 the white pawns would have fallen after geometric manoeuvres by the black queen: 41...♕b6! 42 g3 ♕d6! 43 ♔b2 ♕b8+! 44 ♔a2 ♗xd2 45 ♖xd2 ♕xg3 etc.

41...♕e2! 42 g4 ♕e1+ 43 ♔b2 ♗xd2 44 ♖c8

White's very first threat in this game (♖h8 mate!) almost produces a miracle: the automatic defence 44...g5?? leads to perpetual check: 45 ♖h8+ ♔g6 46 ♖g8+ ♔h6 47 ♖h8+.

44...♗c1+! 0-1

The miracle did not occur! In view of 45 ♖xc1 ♕d2+ and ...♕xd4 White resigned. In my opinion, if you were to show the bare score of this game to some modern analyst, he would date it at roughly the late 1960s to the early 1970s.

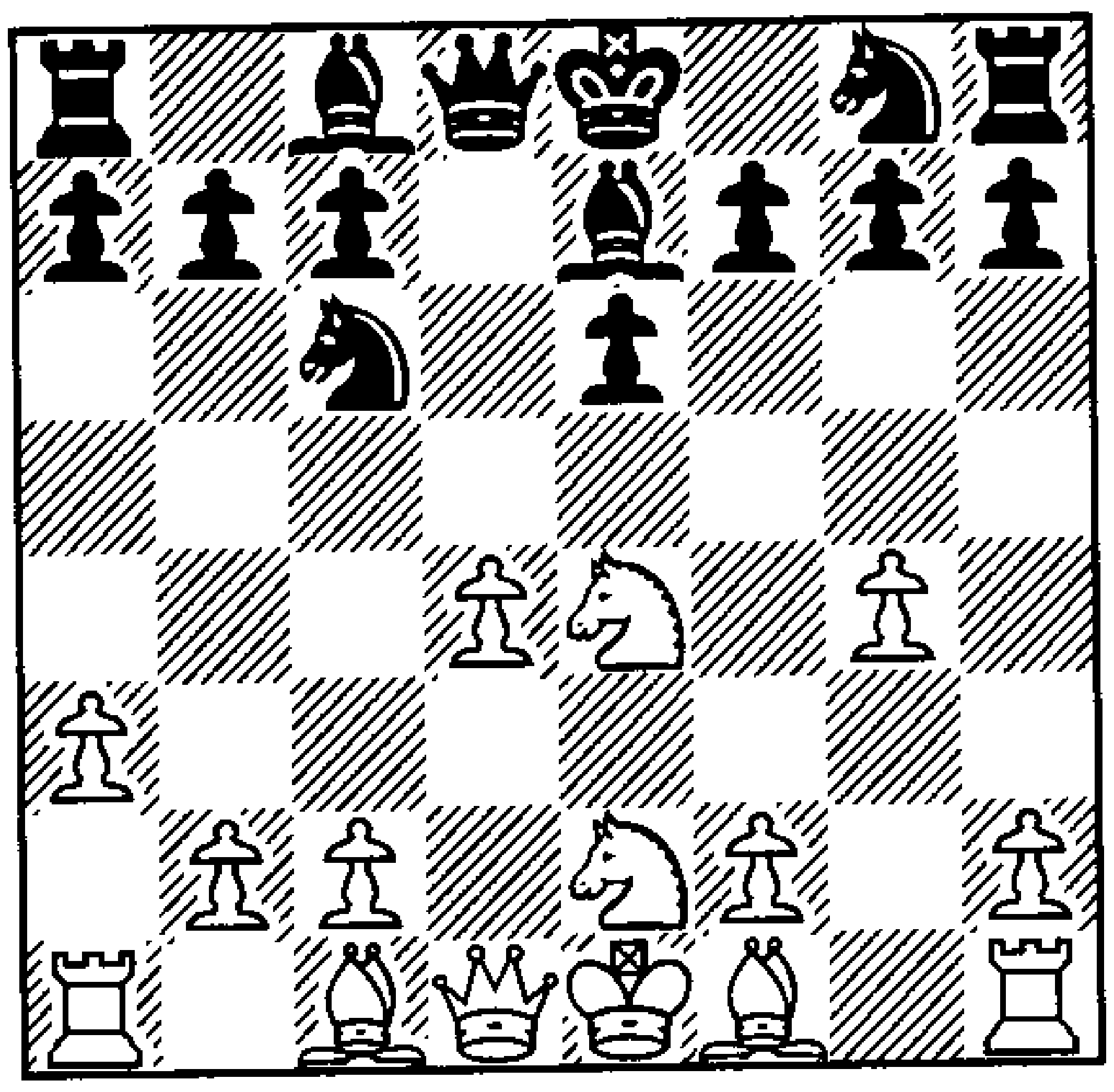
The picture of the start is supplemented by Euwe's failure in the French Defence (½ out of 4), although it was not the opening that was to blame, but the character of the resulting positions. Sharp, open play with a smack of a certain irrationality had long been Alekhine's forte!

Game 142
A.Alekhine-M.Euwe
World Championship Match,
Holland 1935, 7th game
French Defence C15

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♘e2 dxe4 5 a3 ♗e7 (5...♗xc3+ – *Game No.139*) **6 ♘xe4 ♘c6! 7 g4?!**

An extremely dubious experiment! Some commentators called it 'an underestimation of the opponent', and others 'a violation of Steinitz's principles'.

The point is that the fifth game went 7 ♗e3 (7 c3 e5!) 7...♘f6 8 ♘2c3 (8 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 9 ♕d2 e5! is also level Lilienthal-Botvinnik, Moscow 1936) 8...0-0 9 ♘g3 b6 10 ♗e2 ♗b7 11 0-0 ♕d7 12 ♕d2 ♖ad8 13 ♖fd1 ♕c8 with equal chances. And in the seventh game Alekhine decided, as he put it, 'to try by force to hold on to the e4-square.'



7...b6?!

Panic! White's gamble pays off! Both 7...e5 8 d5 ♘d4 and 7...h5!? 8 g5 e5 (Botvinnik) suggest themselves, but the simplest was 7...♘f6! 8 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 9 ♗e3 h5! (even better than 9...♕d5) 10 gxh5 ♕d5, seizing the initiative.

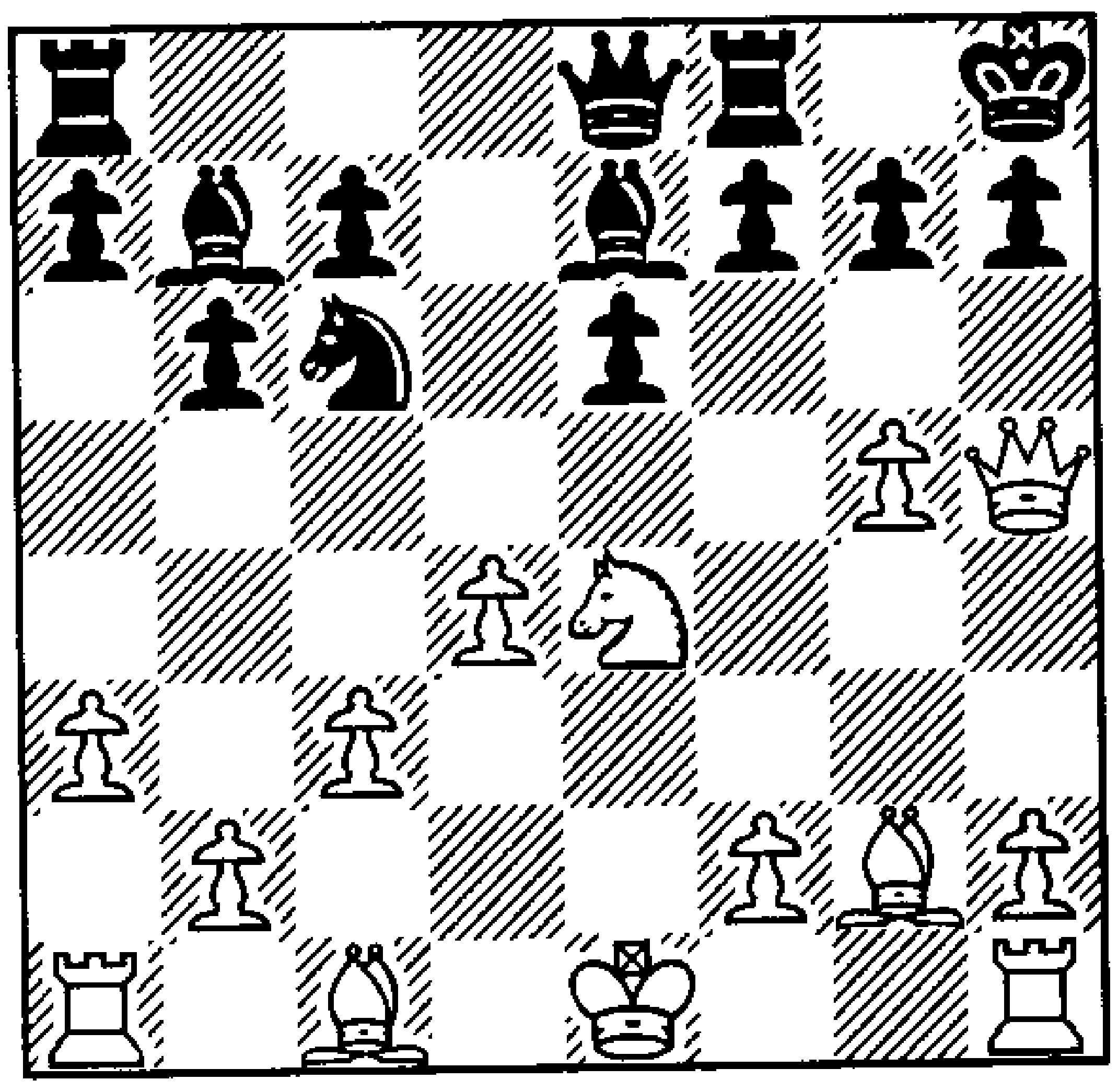
Was it this and similar occurrences that prompted Alekhine to make the devilish piece sacrifice in the sixth game of the return match (*Game No.143*)? Kotov made a subtle comment on the underlying psychological motive behind 7 g4?!: 'Euwe, while being an expert on known theoretical variations, was not always able to find quickly the correct reply to an unexpected, original move by the opponent.'

8 ♗g2 ♗b7 9 c3 ♘f6 10 ♘2g3 0-0?!

Directly into mate! Had Euwe been able to calm down even slightly, he would have preferred 10...♕d7 followed by ...0-0-0.

11 g5 ♘xe4 12 ♘xe4 ♔h8 13 ♕h5! (preventing 13...f5) **13...♕e8?!**

Persisting in his desire to play ...f7-f5 (if 13...f5?, then 14 g6). However, 13...♘a5 was sounder – after this Euwe recommended 14 ♗f4, but in my opinion interesting is 14 ♖g1!? with the initiative.



14 ♘f6!

This is Alekhine! On this occasion – a completely correct pawn sacrifice, giving White a strong initiative.

14...♗xf6

After 14...gxf6? 15 gxf6 ♘a5 (15...♗xf6 16 ♗e4!) there is 16 ♗xb7 ♘xb7 17 fxe7 ♕xe7 18 ♗g5 (18 ♗f4!? ♖g8 19 0-0-0 Tartakower) 18...f6 19 ♗h6 ♖g8 20 0-0-0 ♘d6 21 ♖he1 (Alekhine).

15 gxf6 gxf6 16 ♕h4 ♕d8 (but not

16...♕e7? 17 ♗e4 winning) **17 ♗f4!** and after a nervy struggle with errors by both sides, White won on the 40th move.

After the ninth game Alekhine was leading by 5-2 in wins, and after the 19th by 7-5. At the height of the match, sure of his success, he decided to prepare the ground for a trip to his native Moscow, where in 1936 a third major international tournament was being planned. To the indignation of Russian émigrés, the disgraced champion sent a congratulatory letter to the editorial board of the newspaper *64* (the editor-in-chief of which was that same Krylenko from Amsterdam):

'Not only as a chess player of many years' standing, but also as a person who understands the enormous significance of what has been achieved in the USSR in all aspects of cultural life, I send my sincere greetings to the chess players of the USSR on the 18th anniversary of the October Revolution. A. Alekhine.'

And yet Alekhine contrived to lose the crown! 'My visit to Moscow will have to be delayed,' he said sadly to Flohr (one of Euwe's assistants) after the match. 'I want to go there only as world champion.' And, as he left Holland, he declared: 'Nothing terrible has happened. We will consider that I have loaned the title... for two years!' Fortunately for Alekhine and for chess, the match agreement stipulated the right of the champion to a return match...

But for the moment the overthrown king rushed into a crucible of chess battles – but with mixed success: already the inexorable tread of the new generation was being heard. In Bad Nauheim 1936 he shared first place with the 20-year-old Estonian Paul Keres (6½ out of 9), then took first prize in Dresden (6½ out of 9), stumbled in Podebrady (1. Flohr – 13 out of 17; 2. Alekhine – 12½) and occupied the altogether uncustomary sixth place in the strongest tournament of those times – Nottingham 1936, where he lost by blundering against Capablanca (and also with an unpleasant squabble at the adjournment: who should seal the move?!), was defeated by the 24-year-old USA champion Reshevsky, and played a 'nervy' draw with Botvinnik... The only consolation was a special prize 'for the most brilliant kingside attack' in his game with Alexander and a win over Euwe.

However, the current world champion gained his revenge in Amsterdam 1936, and as a result again finished half a point ahead of his main opponent. The ex-champion revived in Hastings 1936/37 (1. Alekhine – 8 out of 9; 2. Flohr – 7½), but after this came disappointing results in Margate, Kemeri and Bad Nauheim 1937, where the fourth champion again lost to the fifth.

In a word, at the start of the Euwe-Alekhine return match (Holland, 5 October-7 December 1937) the forecasts were in favour of the 36-year-old Dutchman, who was also himself confident of victory. And indeed, Alekhine had always had difficulty playing against Euwe, beginning with their match of 1926/27 – and here he also appeared to have lost his form. The match was again to a maximum of 30 games, and from the very start, as was expected, Euwe took the lead: 1-0, 3-2.

The turning point in the match began with the staggering sixth game. This is probably one of the most vivid demonstrations not only of Alekhine's unrestrained imagination, but also his psychological aggression.

Game 143

A.Alekhine-M.Euwe

World Championship Return Match,
Holland 1937, 6th game
Slav Defence D10

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3

'In my opinion this move gives White more chances of obtaining an opening advantage.' (Alekhine)

3...dxc4 (3...e5 and 3...♘f6 are also quite playable) **4 e4! e5**

According to Alekhine, White has the advantage after 4...b5 5 a4 b4 6 ♘a2 ♘f6 7 e5 ♘d5 8 ♗xc4 (for example: Kasparov-I. Sokolov, Sarajevo 2000) or 5...e5 6 axb5!? (quieter is 6 ♘f3 exd4 7 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 8 ♘xd4 b4 9 ♘d1 Kasparov-Hübner, Belfort 1988) 6...exd4 7 ♗xc4! ♗b4! (7...dxc3 8 ♗xf7+! ♔e7 9 ♕b3 ♘f6 10 e5 ♘e4 11 bxc3) 8 ♖a4 a5 9 bxa6 ‘and White will emerge a pawn to the good.’ (Alekhine) Say, 9...c5 10 ♘e2 ♘xa6 11 0-0 dxc3 12 ♗xf7+ ♔e7 13 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 14 bxc3 etc.

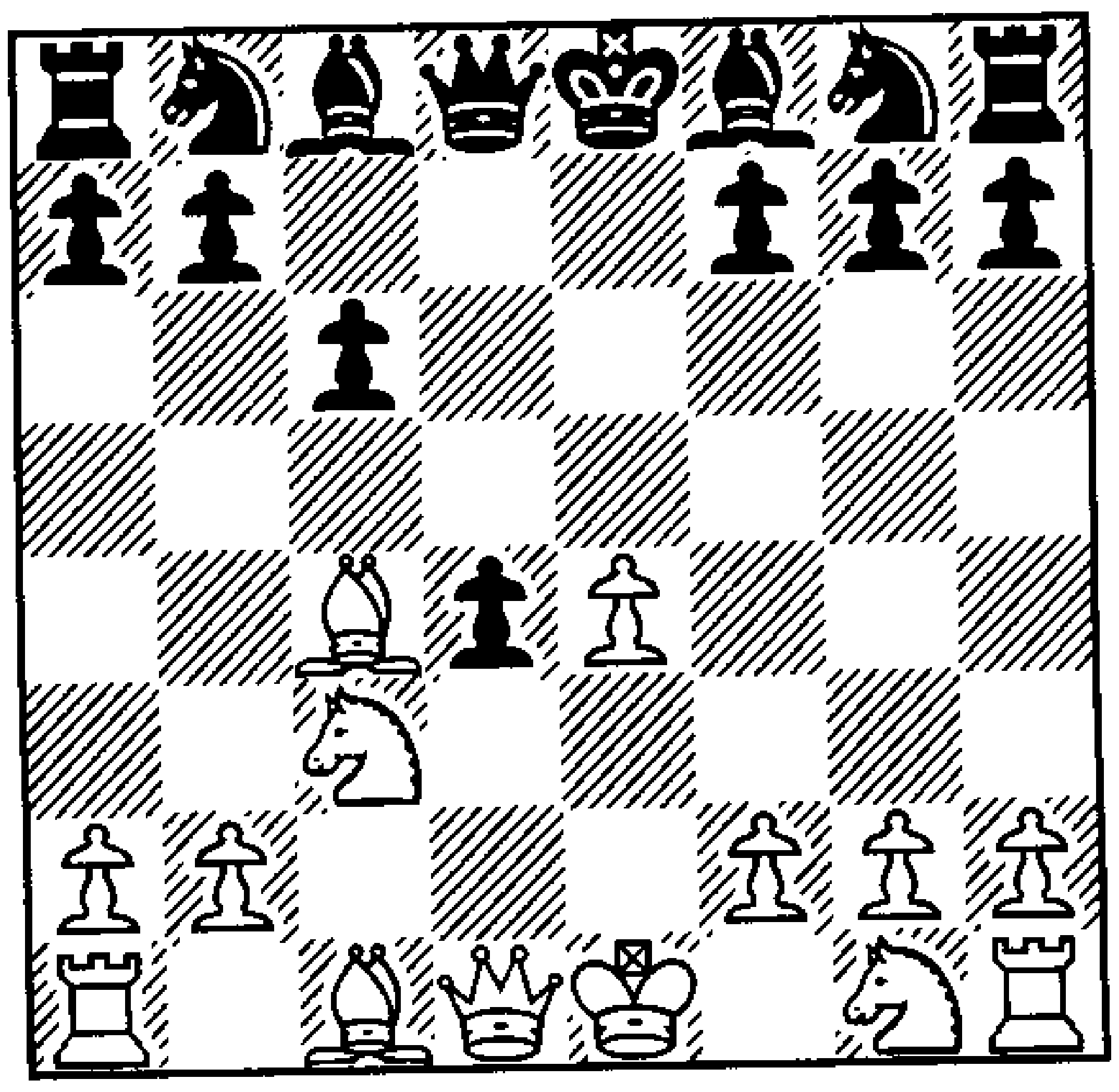
5 ♗xc4?

‘This combination is certainly very tempting and, especially over the board, very difficult to refute; but... the positional exploitation of White’s advantage in space consists in 5 ♘f3! exd4 6 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 7 ♘xd4, after which Black would only get into further trouble by trying to protect the gambit-pawn – for instance, 7...b5 8 a4 b4 9 ♘d1 ♗a6 10 ♗e3 ♘f6 11 f3 followed by ♖c1 and ♗xc4 with a clear positional advantage.’ (Alekhine)

In the aforementioned game with Hübner, which reached the same position by a transposition of moves, I played 10 ♗f4!? ♘f6 11 f3 ♗c5 12 ♘f5 0-0 13 ♖c1 and after 13...c3! 14 bxc3 g6 15 ♘g3 ♘fd7! Black succeeded in defending.

5...exd4

Bad is 5...♕xd4? 6 ♕b3 ♕d7 7 ♗g5! and ♖d1 with a decisive attack.



6 ♘f3!!?

A fantastic move, which, perhaps, won... the match! White simply leaves a piece en prise! Such an idea could only have been thought up by Alekhine – a person who on a new level processed and whirled around in his mind all the ideas of the masters from the past.

‘Putting before Black a most difficult practical problem.’ (Alekhine) But objectively, it most probably loses...

6...b5?

The worst of the possible replies! ‘My “chief” variation was the following: 6...dxc3 7 ♗xf7+ ♔e7 8 ♕b3 ♘f6 9 e5 ♘e4 10 0-0! ♕b6 (or 10...♘a6 11 ♕c4! ♘ac5 12 ♗g5+! ♘xg5 13 ♘xg5 with a winning attack) 11 ♕c4! cxb2 (*11...♗f5 12 ♘h4 – G. K.*) 12 ♗xb2 ♕xb2 13 ♕xe4 ♔xf7 14 ♘g5+ ♔e8 15 ♕c4 ♗e7 16 ♕f7+ ♔d8 17 ♖ad1+ ♗d7 18 ♘e6+ ♔c8 19 ♕xe7 ♕xe5 20 ♖fe1 ♕f6 (*far more tenacious is 20...♕a5! 21 ♘c5 ♖d8 22 ♘e4 etc. – G. K.*) 21 ♖xd7 ♕xe7 (21...♘xd7 22 ♕d6) 22 ♖xe7 with a won position.

‘But, instead of 8...♘f6 Black could play 8...cxb2! 9 ♗xb2 ♕b6! 10 ♗xg8 ♖xg8 11 ♕xg8 ♕b4+ 12 ♘d2 ♕xb2, after which his middlegame chances, in spite of the approximate equality of forces, should be estimated decidedly higher than White’s remaining possibilities of a direct attack.’ (Alekhine)

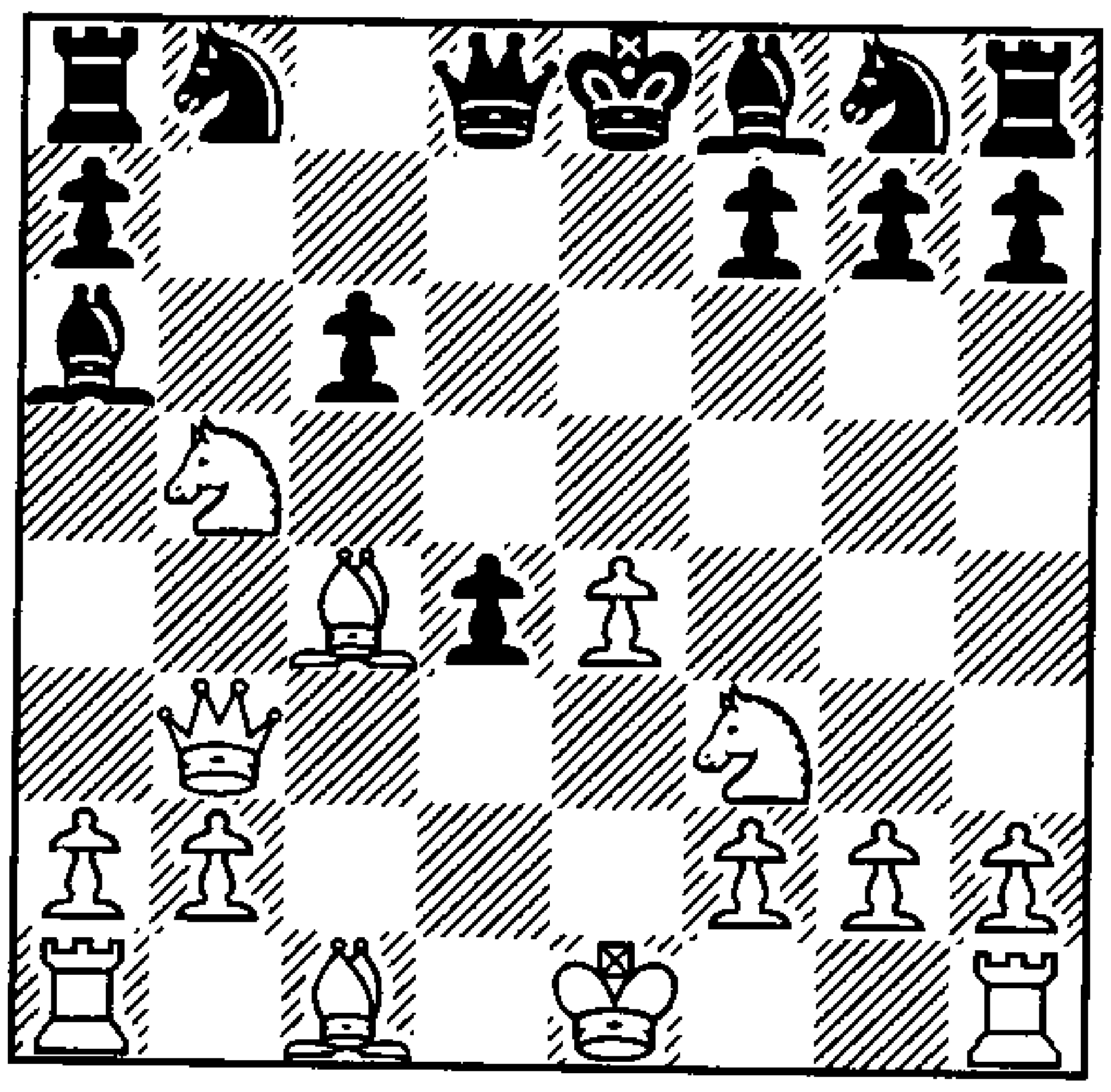
Black also has a great advantage after 11 ♗a3+ c5, as shown by an analysis by Goncharov in the newspaper *64* (1938): 12 ♕xg8 ♕a5+ 13 ♘d2 ♕xa3 14 0-0 ♘c6 15 ♕xh7 ♗e6 or 12 ♗xc5+ ♕xc5 13 0-0 ♕h5!! (but not 13...♖h8? 14 ♖fc1 ♕b6 15 ♖xc8 ♕xb3 16 axb3) 14 ♕xg8?! ♗e6 15 ♕h8 ♘c6.

A computer verification confirms the correctness of these variations. But Euwe did not find them. He was obviously in a state of shock, since, after spending a mass of time, he immediately made a losing move. After all, if the worst came to the worst it was possible to play 6...♗c5 7 0-0! dxc3 (somewhat inferior is 7...♘f6 8 ♘a4 ♗e7 9 e5 ♘d5 10 ♘xd4 0-0 11 ♘c3) 8 ♗xf7+ ♔e7 9 ♕b3 cxb2 10 ♗xb2 ♘f6 and Black is alright.

7 ♘xb5

‘Dr Euwe admits simply having overlooked this reply. This time the knight obviously cannot be taken because of 8 ♗d5 etc.’ (Alekhine)

7...♗a6 8 ♕b3!



At a stroke White defends his bishop, prevents the check at b4, and attacks f7.

8...♕e7

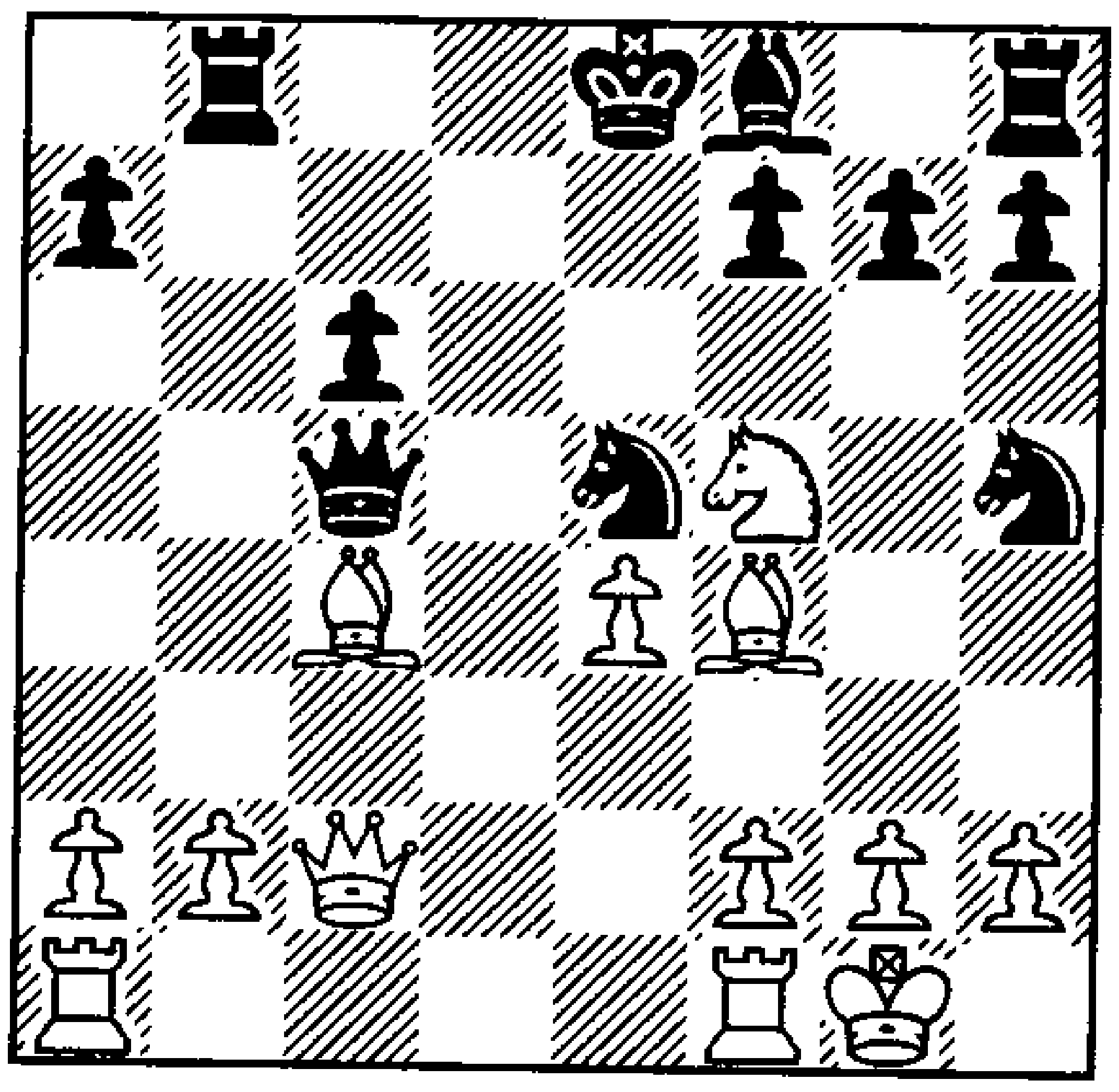
'If 8...♗xb5 then 9 ♗xf7+ ♔d7 10 ♘xd4! (not 10 ♗xg8? ♖xg8) etc. with an easy win.' (Alekhine) Essentially, the battle is this game was already over by the eighth move: White is a pawn up with a strong attack. Euwe drags out the resistance, most probably merely to ease his conscience.

9 0-0 ♗xb5 10 ♗xb5 ♘f6 (but not 10...cxb5? 11 ♕d5) **11 ♗c4 ♘bd7 12 ♘xd4! ♖b8 13 ♕c2 ♕c5 14 ♘f5** (14 ♘xc6? ♖c8) **14...♘e5 15 ♗f4!**

Avoiding a trap: 15 ♘xg7+? ♔d8! 16 ♖d1+ ♔c7 and there are two white pieces en prise.

15...♘h5

And this allows a little combination, which relieves Black's sufferings.



16 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 17 ♕xc5 ♗xc5 18 ♗xe5 ♖b5 (or 18...♖be8 19 ♗d6) **19 ♗d6** (with the threat of 20 a4) **19...♗b6 20 b4!**

'And now the rook is in danger. Black cannot avoid further loss of material.' (Alekhine)

20...♖d8 21 ♖ad1 c5 22 bxc5 ♗xc5 23 ♖d5! 1-0

Also winning at least the exchange.

Not a bad piece of preparation: one knight move – and Euwe was finished! The whole point is that Alekhine was able to climb to heights that were unknown to his opponent: this was a level of chess from the second half or even the end of the 20th century. It was this violent activity, this furious onslaught right from the opening that constituted Alekhine's real strength!

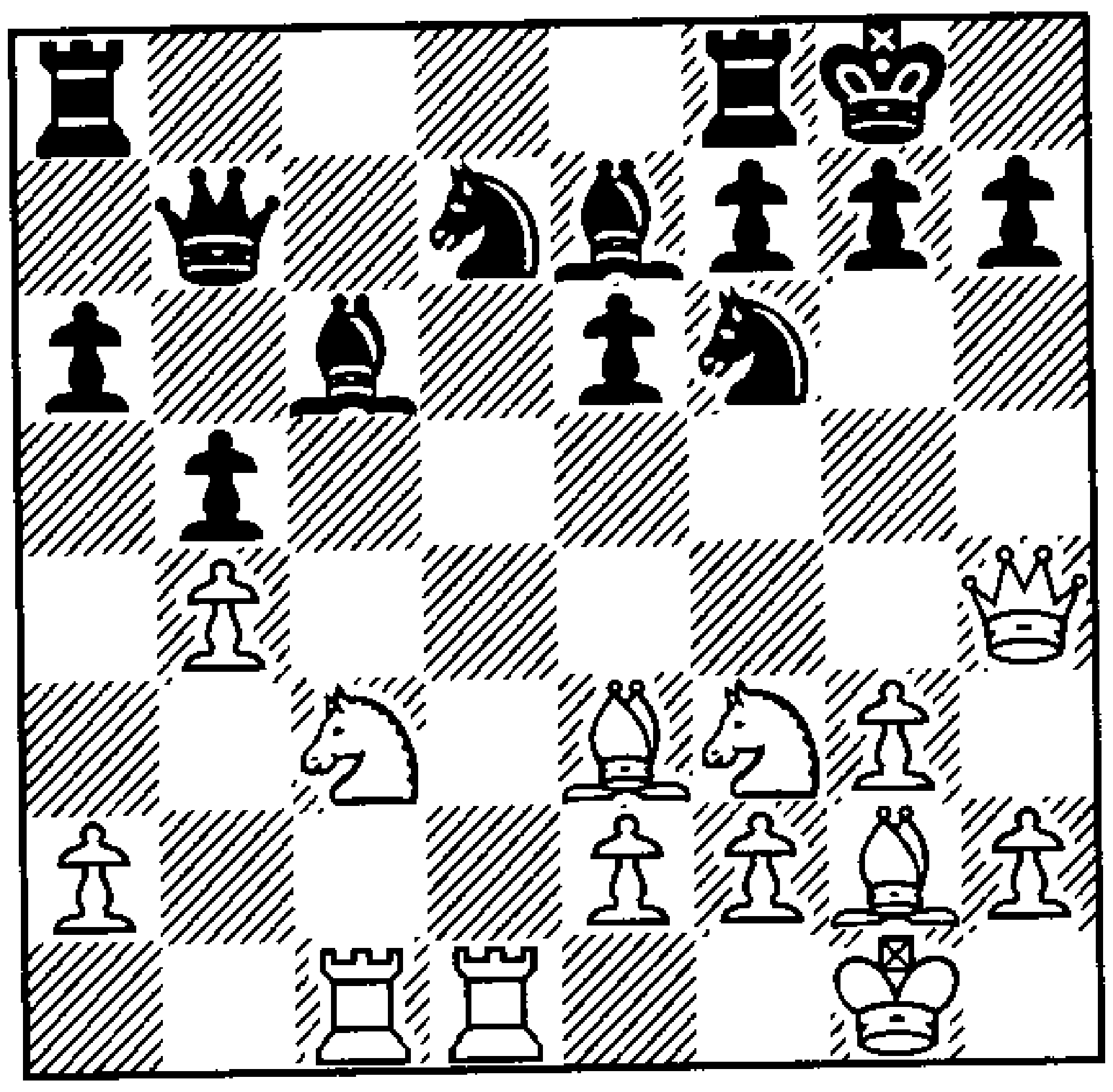
The stunned Euwe then lost the seventh and eighth games, and after a draw in the ninth he also lost the 10th. The outcome of the return match was decided... The Dutchman held on as best he could, but he was unable to recover fully from the heavy blow that he received in the sixth game. Whereas Alekhine displayed the inventiveness that had been lost at the end of the first match, but he played more accurately, with a smaller degree of risk. Although he complicated the play, it was not at any price; he sacrificed, but in moderation – he maintained the tension, not allowing his opponent any obvious positional pluses. And if he did overstep the mark, he didn't lose control of the situation, and didn't go to extremes, as in the matches of 1934 and 1935. I think that this balanced play by Alekhine also affected Euwe: his opponent was much better prepared for the match than he expected.

Nevertheless the struggle from 11th-20th games was still very tense. In addition, fatigue took its toll – the players again, like two years earlier, travelled right round the country: The Hague – Rotterdam – Harlem – Groningen – Amsterdam...

Game 144

A.Alekhine-M.Euwe

World Championship Return Match,
Holland 1937, 16th game



18 ♖xd7! ♗xd7 (18...♕xd7? 19 ♘e5) **19 ♘g5 ♕b8 20 ♗xa8 ♕xa8 21 ♘xh7! ♖c8!**

After 21...♘d5 22 ♘g5 ♗xg5 23 ♗xg5 White is simply a healthy pawn to the good.

22 ♘g5

It is not clear whether it would have been more advantageous to play 22 ♗c5!? ♗xc5 23 ♘xf6+ gxf6 24 ♕g4+ ♔h8 25 bxc5 ♖xc5 26 ♕d4 ♕c6 27 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 28 a3 e5.

22...♖c4! 23 ♘ce4 ♖xc1+

Not wishing to fight for a draw by 23...♖xe4 24 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 25 ♕xe4 ♘xe4 26 ♖c7 ♘f6 with a knight and bishop against an active enemy rook.

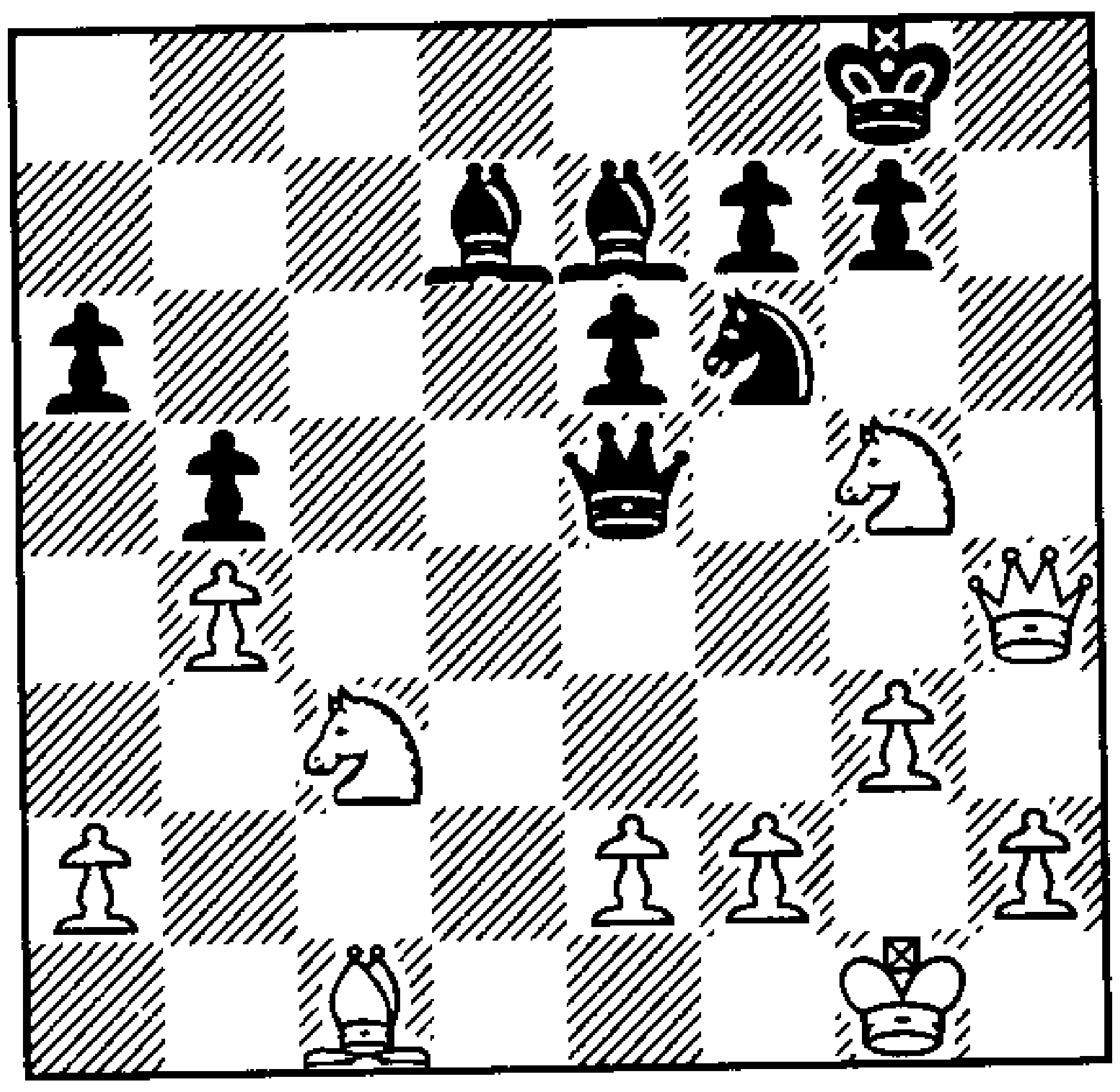
24 ♗xc1 ♕d5 25 ♘c3

25 ♘xf6+?! would have been a blank shot – 25...♗xf6 26 ♕h7+ ♔f8 27 ♗e3 ♕d1+ 28 ♔g2 ♗c6+ 29 ♘f3 ♕xe2 30 ♗c5+ ♔e8 31 ♕g8+ ♔d7 32 ♕xf7+ ♔c8 with an equal game.

25...♕e5?

Of course, essential was 25...♕c4! 26 ♕xc4 bxc4 27 a3 ♘d5 with real chances of saving the game. Here Alekhine sank into lengthy thought...

According to Euwe, 'The 16th game went down in history as a "comedy of errors": for almost a whole hour, during which the players each made two moves, Alekhine could have carried out a winning combination. It was seen by the entire audience, who waited with bated breath, but it was not noticed by either him or me.'



26 ♗b2?

Inconceivable! After the elementary 26 ♕h8+! ♔xh8 27 ♘xf7+ ♔g8 28 ♘xe5 ♗xb4 29 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 (29...♗xc3 30 ♘c5) 30 ♘e4 White has a won minor piece endgame.

Incidentally, White won with a similar classic stroke in the well-known game Petrosian-Spassky (Moscow 10th matchgame 1966), which we will analyse in the second volume.

26...♗c6??

A unique case of mutual blindness. The queen should have been urgently moved from the mined square – 26...♕f5!

27 a3??

Fantastic: here 27 ♕h8+! ♔xh8 28 ♘xf7+ ♔g8 29 ♘xe5 would have forced immediate capitulation!

27...♗d6 28 e3 ♕f5 29 e4 ♕g6 30 f3 ♘d7 31 ♘h3 f6 32 ♘f4 ♕f7 33 ♕g4?! (finally losing hopes of converting the extra pawn) **33...♘e5! 34 ♕xe6 ♘xf3+ 35 ♔f2 ♕xe6 36 ♘xe6 ♘d2 37 ♘d4 ♘xe4+** with a draw on the 65th move.

'A fortunate draw is more than the salvaging of a half point,' writes Euwe. 'For me it was as though the start of a new match, and I made a last attempt to retain my title.'

By winning the 17th game, the champion reduced the deficit to '-2' and in this part of the match the key game became the 18th, in which a present-day *tabiya* in the Tarrasch Defence Deferred was tested for the first time.

Game 145

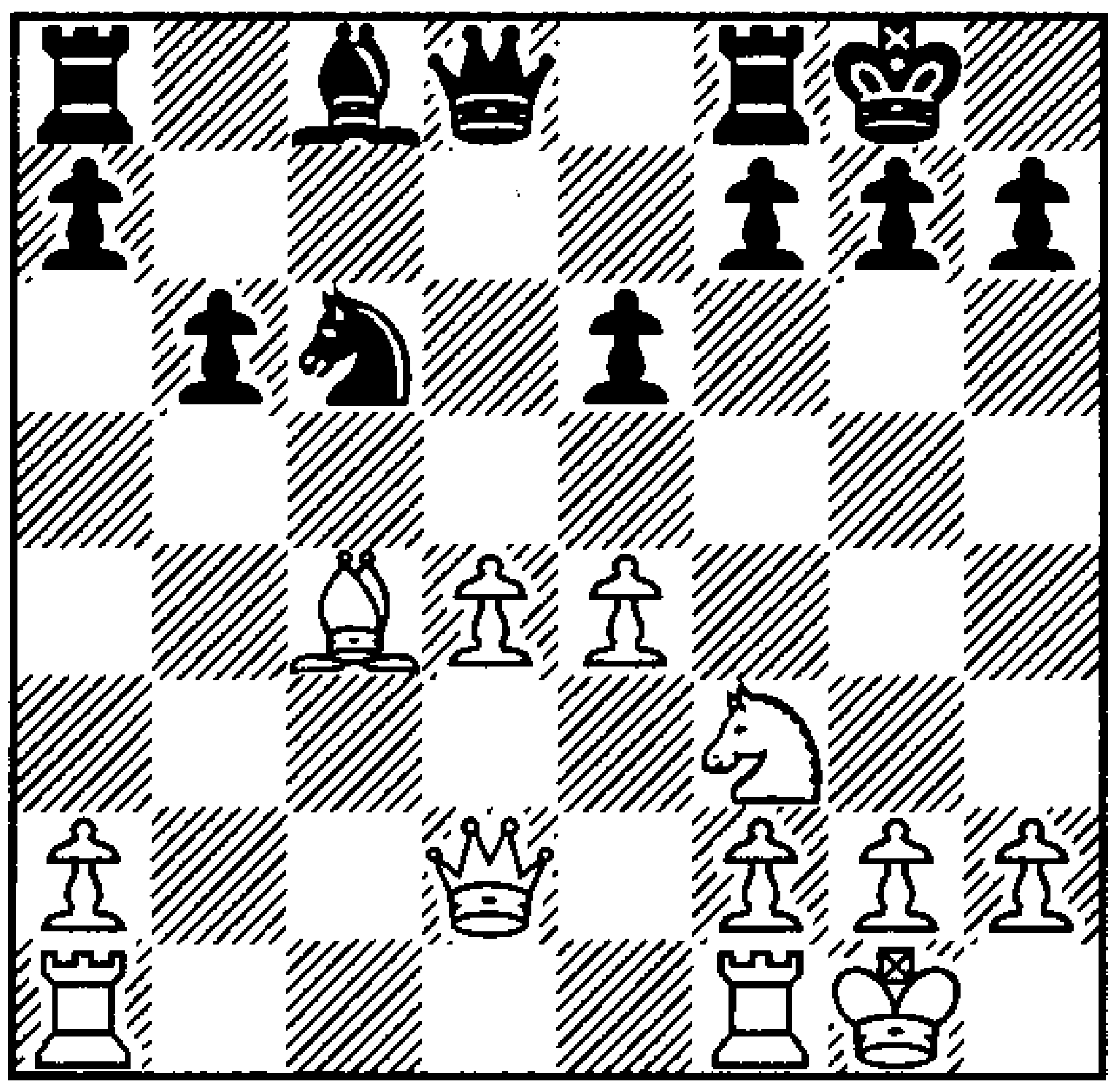
A.Alekhine-M.Euwe

World Championship Return Match,
Holland 1937, 18th game
Queen's Gambit D41

1 ♘f3 d5 2 c4 e6 3 d4 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 c5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 e4 ♘xc3 7 bxc3 cxd4 8 cxd4 ♗b4+

After 8...♘c6 9 ♗c4 b5?! (Spassky-Fischer, Reykjavik 9th matchgame 1972) the best is considered to be 10 ♗e2!

9 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ (passive is 9...♕a5?! 10 ♖b1! ♗xd2+ 11 ♕xd2 ♕xd2+ 12 ♔xd2 as in Rubinstein-Schlechter, San Sebastian 1912) **9 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 10 ♕xd2 0-0 11 ♗c4 ♘c6 12 0-0 b6**



13 ♖fd1

In the chapter on the 10th world champion we will examine 13 ♖ad1! (Spassky-Petrosian 5th matchgame 1960).

13...♗b7

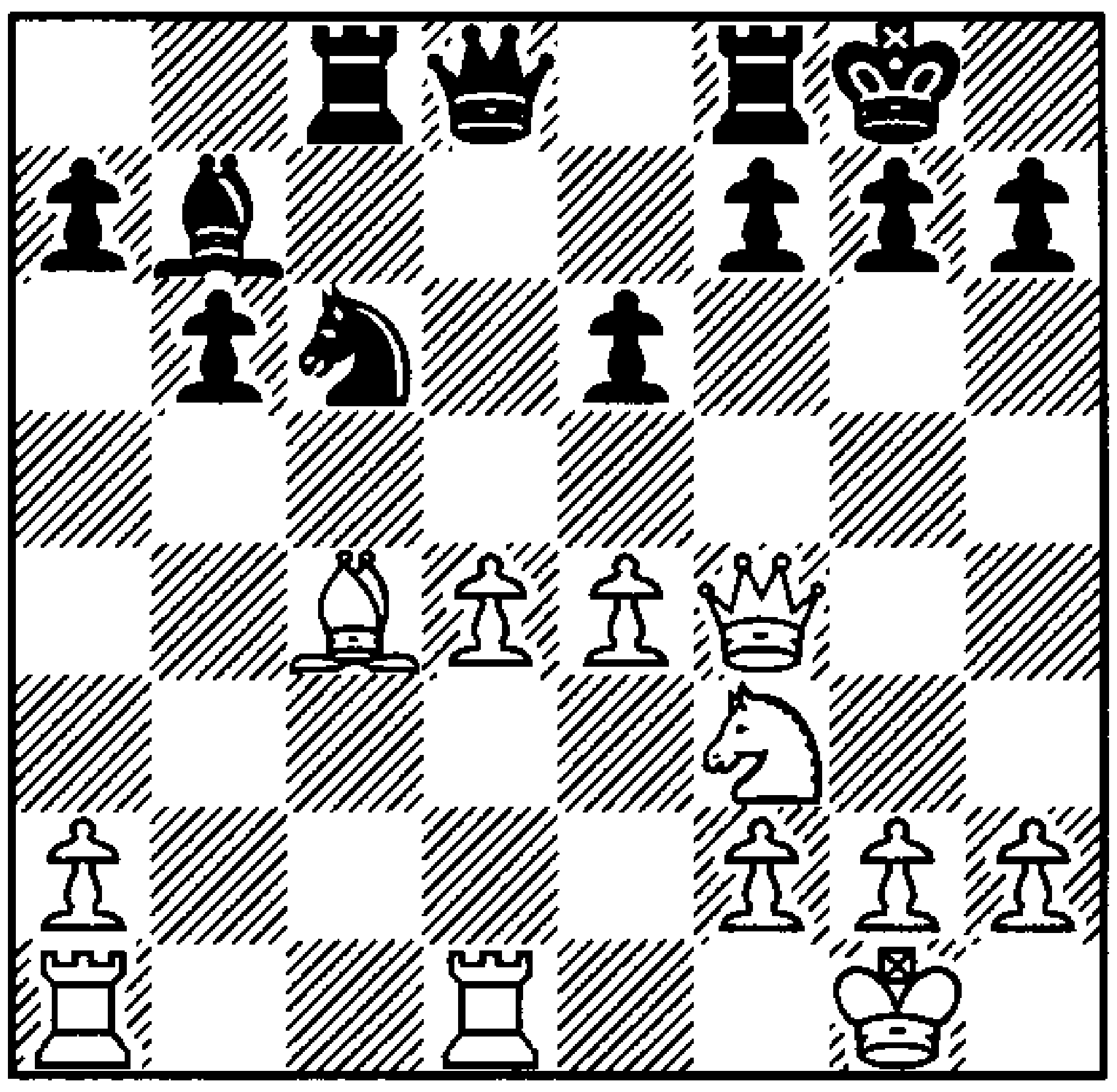
Also possible is 13...♘a5 14 ♗d3 ♗b7, as Korchnoi and Polugayevsky played in the 1960s. But 13...♘e7 is strongly met by 14 a4! ♗b7 15 ♗d3 ♘g6 16 a5 (16 g3!?) 16...♘h4 17 ♘xh4 ♕xh4 18 ♕e3 ♖fd8 19 ♖ab1 ♖d6 20 e5! (Petrosian-Portisch, Skopje Olympiad 1972).

14 ♕f4

Before this the line 14 ♕e2 ♕e7 15 ♗a6 ♗xa6 16 ♕xa6 f5! equalising had been tried (Teichmann-Rubinstein, Berlin 1924), and after it – both 14 ♕e3 and 14 ♖ac1!? ♖c8 15 d5 exd5 16 ♗xd5.

14...♖c8

Perhaps rather more solid is 14...♕f6!? 15 ♕e3 ♖fd8 16 e5 ♕h6! with equal chances (Reshevsky-Fine, Hastings 1937/38) or 16 ♖ac1 ♖ac8 (Yudovich-Averbakh, Moscow 1949).



15 d5 exd5 16 ♗xd5 ♕e7 17 ♘g5!?

Again typical Alekhine aggression: the triple capture on f7 is threatened, followed by ♖d7+ and ♖xb7. If 17 ♘h4, then simply 17...g6.

17...♘e5! (an attractive tactical trick) **18 ♗xb7**

Alekhine considered this a mistake, since he had missed Black's 20th move. He recommended 18 h4, 'maintaining an appreciable pressure', but it is not clear to me what White pressure there is to speak of after 18...h6! For example: 19 ♗xb7 (19 ♘h3?! ♘g6!; 19 ♘f3 ♘xf3+, 20...♗xd5 etc.) 19...hxg5 (19...♘g6!?) 20 ♕xg5 ♕xb7 21 ♕xe5 ♖fe8 22 ♕d5 ♕e7 with level chances.

18...♘g6 19 ♕f5 ♕xb7 20 ♖d7 ♕a6!

Clever, although it is not obviously bad to play 20...♖c7 21 ♖ad1 ♖xd7 (21...h6!?) 22 ♖xd7 ♕a6 or 22...♕c8.

21 h4

It turns out that if 21 ♖xf7 Euwe had prepared 21...♕xa2! 22 ♖xf8+ ♘xf8 'and White's attack has evaporated, whereas Black's queenside pawns are very dangerous.' (Kotov) Although, in my view, after 23 ♖e1 the play is still double-edged.

21...♖c5 22 ♖d5 ♖xd5?

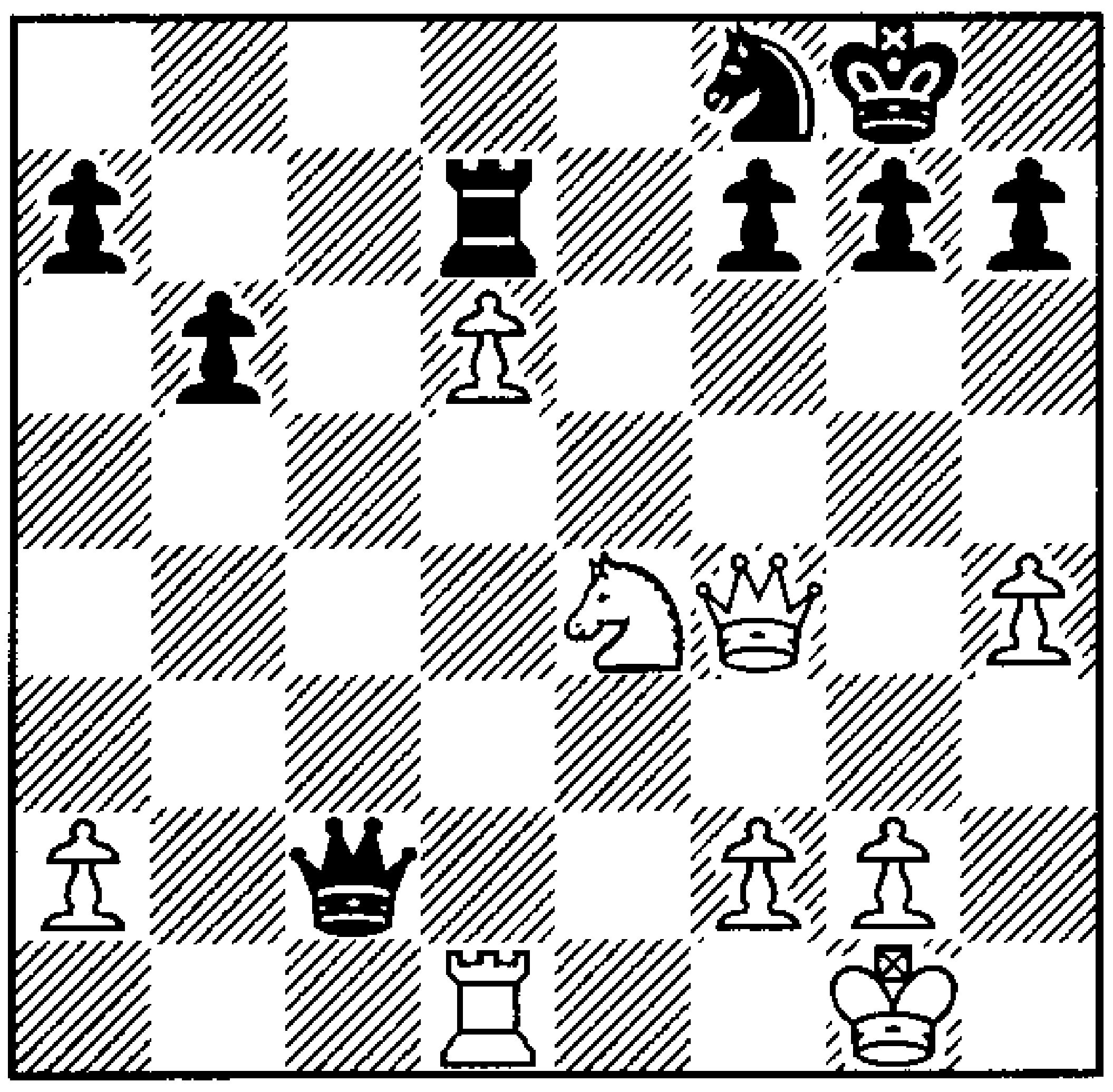
A mistake in an equal position: why give the opponent a strong passed pawn in the centre? Of course, correct was 22...♕c8 23 ♖xc5 ♕xc5 24 ♕xc5 bxc5 25 ♖c1 ♖c8 equalising.

23 exd5 ♕c8 24 ♕e4 ♖e8 25 ♕a4!

A double attack, enabling White to advance his passed pawn.

25...♖e7 26 d6 ♖d7 27 ♖d1 (with the threat of h4-h5-h6) **27...♘f8 28 ♕f4?!** (Alekhine rightly thought that the quiet 28 g3! was better) **28...♕c6 29 ♘e4 ♕c2**

The game enters the phase of time-trouble 'turbulence'.



30 ♖c1?

Why give up the pawn? It is true that 30 ♖d2 does not look right, but for some reason none of the commentators pointed out the simple move 30 ♖e1!, and 30...♕xa2? is not possible in view of 31 ♘f6+! gxf6 32 ♕g4+ ♔h8 33 ♖e8 ♕a1+ 34 ♔h2 ♕e5+ 35 ♖xe5 fxe5 36 ♕f5 with an obvious plus. A nuance overlooked by the whole chess community! With material equal, White would still have retained definite chances of success, thanks to his powerful passed pawn.

30...♕xa2 31 h5

'The beginning of an elaborate plan which eventually throws away the win. The logical and correct way was 31 ♖c8, which I rejected because of the following consideration: Black will answer 31...♕e6 with the threat of 32...f5. This consideration was entirely erroneous, as after, for instance, 32 ♖a8! Black's 32...f5 could be met by one of two methods: 33 f3, and even more effectively 33 ♘g5 ♕xd6 34 ♕c4+ ♕d5 35 ♘e6! and wins. After 31 ♖c8 almost all the black pieces would be immobilised and the actual winning procedure for White, therefore, merely a matter of technique.' (Alekhine)

However, instead of 33...♕xd6? much stronger is Botvinnik's suggestion of 33...♕d5!, winning the d6-pawn (and the game): 34 ♖b8 ♕d1+ 35 ♔h2 ♕xd6.

Therefore 32 ♖b8 is better, but even then, according to Botvinnik, Black has an acceptable defence: 32...f5 33 ♘g5 ♕xd6 (*? – G. K.*) 34 ♕c4+ ♕d5 35 ♘e6 ♕d1+ 36 ♔h2 ♕d6+ 37 g3 ♕xb8. In turn, Kotov suggests 35 ♕xd5+! ♖xd5 36 ♘e6 ♔f7 37 ♘xf8 h6 38 h5 f4 39 ♘g6 'and White should be able to convert his material advantage, although this involves considerable technical difficulties.' But in my opinion, here too after 33...♕d5! it is hard to offer White any good advice (34 ♘xh7?! ♔xh7 35 ♖xf8 ♕d1+ 36 ♔h2 ♕xd6 wins for Black).

31...h6 32 ♘g3 (32 ♖c8!? Alekhine) **32...♘e6 33 ♕e5 ♕a6 34 ♘f5 ♕d3 35 ♔h2**

White is not satisfied with either the fight for a draw by 35 ♖c8+ ♔h7 36 ♘xh6!? (Kotov), nor even an immediate draw after 35 ♘xh6+ gxh6 36 ♖c8+ ♖d8 37 ♖xd8+ ♘xd8 38 ♕e8+ ♔g7 39 ♕xd8 (Alekhine, Botvinnik).

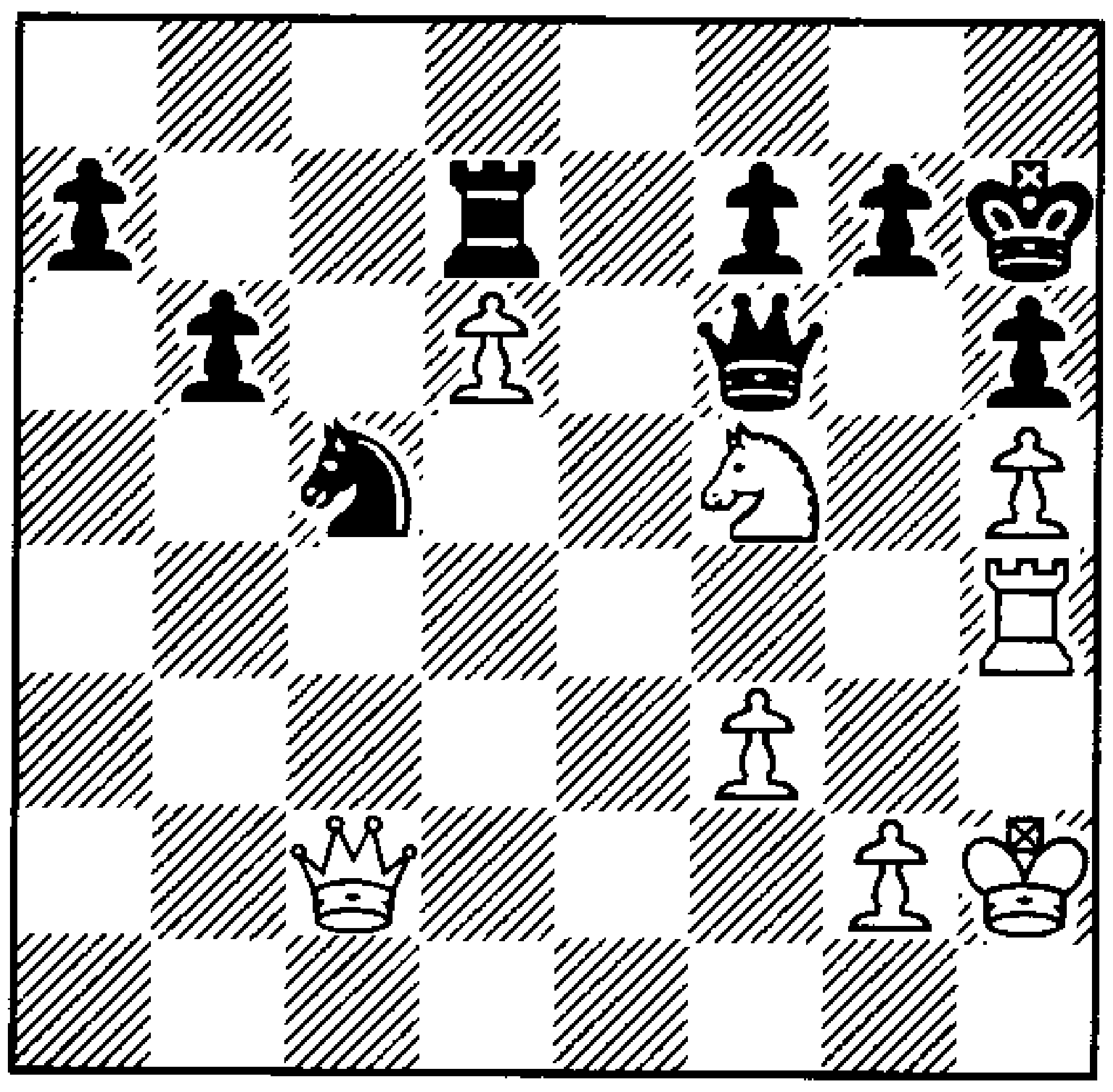
35...♔h7 36 ♖c3 ♕d1 37 f3 ♕d2 38 ♖c4 ♕g5 39 ♖h4?

Having achieved a drawn position,

Alekhine tries to play for a win and, as often happens, himself ends up on the verge of defeat. After 39 ♖g4! ♕xh5+ 40 ♖h4 ♕g6 41 ♖g4 Black would have had to agree to a repetition of moves (41...♕h5+ 42 ♖h4), since both 41...♕f6? 42 ♖xg7+ and 41...♘g5? 42 f4 f6 43 ♕b5 are bad.' (Kotov)

39...♕f6 40 ♕e4 ♘c5 41 ♕c2

Here the game was adjourned and Euwe sealed his move. White has a rather unpleasant position.



41...a5?!

'A careful examination of the possibilities for both sides brought me to the conclusion that the most promising one for Black was the seemingly less aggressive one: 41...♔h8 42 g3 (best) 42...♖d8! 43 ♖g4 ♖g8, after which he would threatens to advance his a-pawn with decisive effect. Still, Black's next move did not surprise me, as I had analysed it, both when played at once and also after 41...♔h8 42 g3.' (Alekhine)

42 g3!

'This safety measure is necessary in all variations.' (Alekhine) Subsequently too White plays very resourcefully during the resumption, all the time finding the best moves.

42...a4

More venomous was Alekhine's suggestion of 42...♔h8 43 ♖g4 a4 (*no better is 43...♖d8 44 ♖xg7 ♘b7 45 ♖g4 ♘xd6 46 ♖f4 – G. K.*) 44 ♖xg7 a3 45 ♖g4! ♖d8 (if 45...♕b2, then 46 ♕xb2+ axb2 47 ♖b4) 46 ♖f4 a2 (or 46...♘d3 47 ♕xd3 a2 48 ♖a4) 47 ♕xa2 ♘d3 48 ♕c4 ♘xf4 49 ♕xf4 and 50 g4 with a draw thanks to the knight-marvel on f5.

43 ♖g4

'The first move of the saving combination which I was lucky enough to find over the board after about half an hour of anxiety. One of the points of Black's previous move was that White could not play here the tempting 43 ♘e7+ ♔h8 44 ♖xa4 because of the winning reply 44...♕xf3!' (Alekhine)

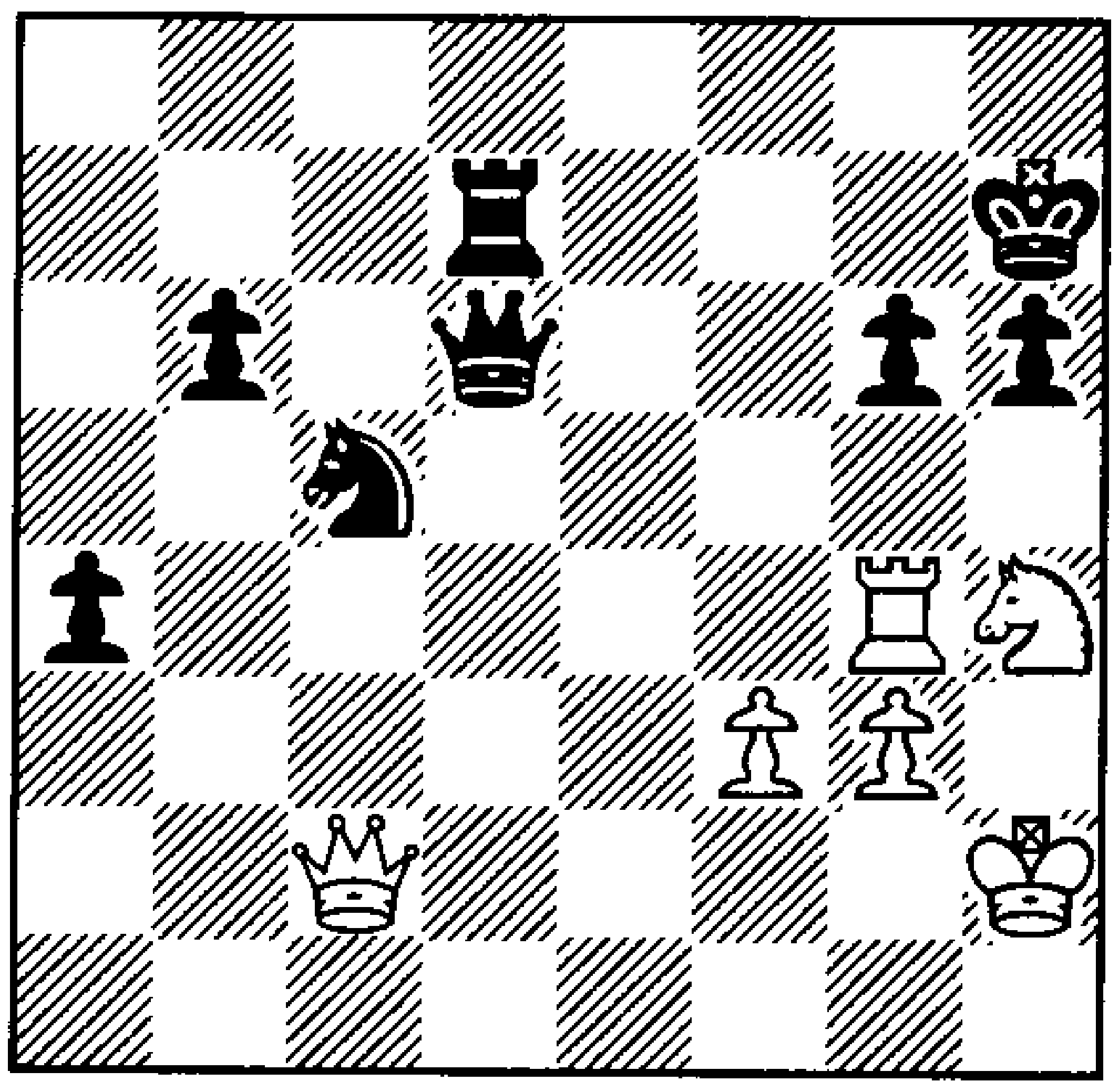
43...g6 (useless is 43...a3 44 ♘xg7+ ♔h8 45 ♘f5 with sufficient counterplay) **44 ♘h4!** (but not 44 hxg6+? fxg6 45 ♘h4 ♖g7)

44...♕xd6

A draw would have resulted from 44...a3 45 hxg6+ fxg6 46 ♘xg6 ♕b2 47 ♘f8+ ♔h8 48 ♘g6+, since 48...♔g8? is bad because of 49 ♘e5+! ♖g7 50 ♕xb2 axb2 51 ♖b4.

45 hxg6+ fxg6

The culmination of the game and to a considerable degree of the entire match.



46 ♖d4!!

One of those thunderous Alekhine surprises! The capture of the rook leads to perpetual check (46...♕xd4 47 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 48 ♕e8+). I think that this stroke must have staggered Euwe. In this match he was all the time experiencing something of a psychological shock, because his opponent kept finding moves that were beyond his understanding...

46...♕e6 47 ♖xd7+ ♘xd7 48 ♕xa4 h5 49 ♕c2 ♘e5 50 ♔g2! (another trap!)

50...♘c4?

Black falls into it. 50...♕c4! was correct – here, according to Alekhine, 51 ♕d2 ♕c5 52 f4 ♕c6+ 53 ♔g1 ♘f3+ 54 ♘xf3 ♕xf3 55 ♕e1 would have given White significant drawing chances. He also has counterplay after 53...♘g4 54 ♕a2 ♕c1+ (54...♔h6 55 ♕b2) 55 ♔g2 ♔h6 56 ♘f3. But in either case the position would still have been not altogether clear: Black is a pawn up! And I don't know how the game would have ended, if the two players had exchanged colours...

51 ♘xg6! ½-½

A check for a check, a queen for a queen: 51...♘e3+ 52 ♔f2 ♘xc2 53 ♘f8+ and 54 ♘xe6. Draw!

'This game was the turning point in the match,' considers Alekhine. 'By not winning it, Euwe lost most of his chances of retaining the title of world champion.' Most, but not yet all! 'I missed a clear win in the 19th game,' writes Euwe, 'and excellent chances in the 20th. The score became 11-9. And here, just as the 21st game of the first match became Alekhine's "Sedan", so the same numbered game in the return match became my "Sedan"... The difference in the scores again grew to three points.'

But the match was finally settled by the amazing and, I would say, legendary 22nd game, in which Alekhine's knight leaped around the entire board, in the end forcing his weary opponent to resign. Although, as computer analysis shows, he was not bound to lose...

Game 146

A.Alekhine-M.Euwe

World Championship Return Match,
Holland 1937, 22nd game
Réti Opening A09

1 ♘f3 d5 2 c4 (as bequeathed by Réti) **2...d4** (I should remind you that Lasker played 2...c6 – *Game No.71*) **3 e3**

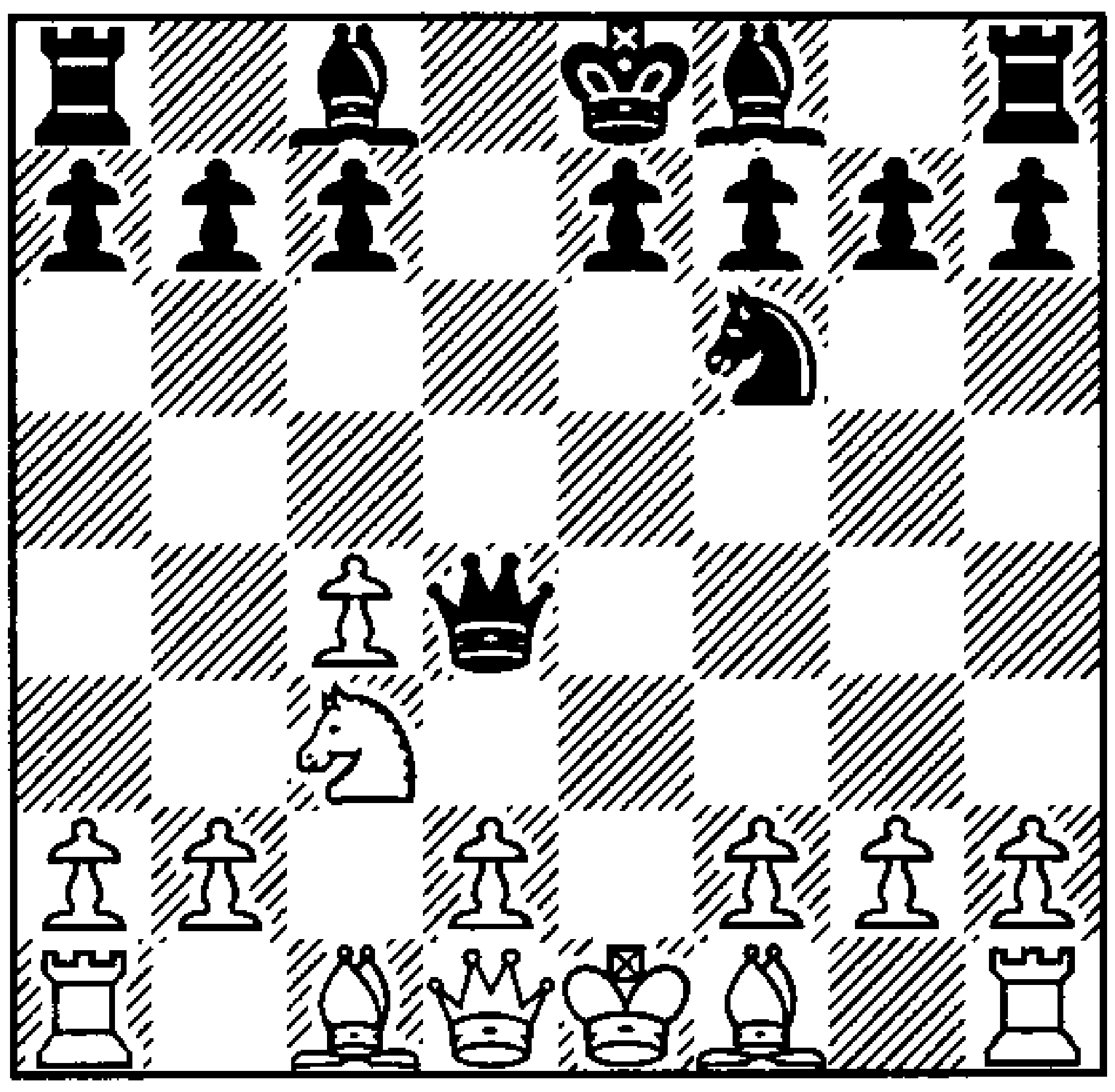
After 3 b4 Black has time to support his d4-pawn by 3...f6 4 e3 e5.

3...♘c6

'After 3...c5 4 b4 f6 White can play not 5 bxc5 e5! with about even chances, but 5 exd4 cxd4 6 c5! (this last move, which appears very effective, was discovered by myself when preparing for the match) after which the weakness of the diagonal a2-g8 would cause Black considerable trouble. If 6...e5, then 7 ♗c4; if 6...♕d5, then 7 ♕c2 (*or 7 ♗b5!? ♘c6 8 d3 – G. K.*); if 6...a5, then 7 ♕a4+ ♗d7 8 b5 e5 9 ♗c4 and Black cannot play 9...♗xc5 because of 10 ♗xg8 followed by 11 ♕c4.' (Alekhine) There only remains 9...♘h6 10 ♗a3! etc.

4 exd4 ♘xd4 5 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 6 ♘c3 ♘f6

Alekhine recommended 6...♗g4, but here Black has to reckon with 7 ♕a4+! (Keres-Euwe, Noordwijk 1938). 6...e5 7 d3 ♘e7 has also been played, but nowadays the height of fashion is 6...c6 7 d3 ♘h6!?



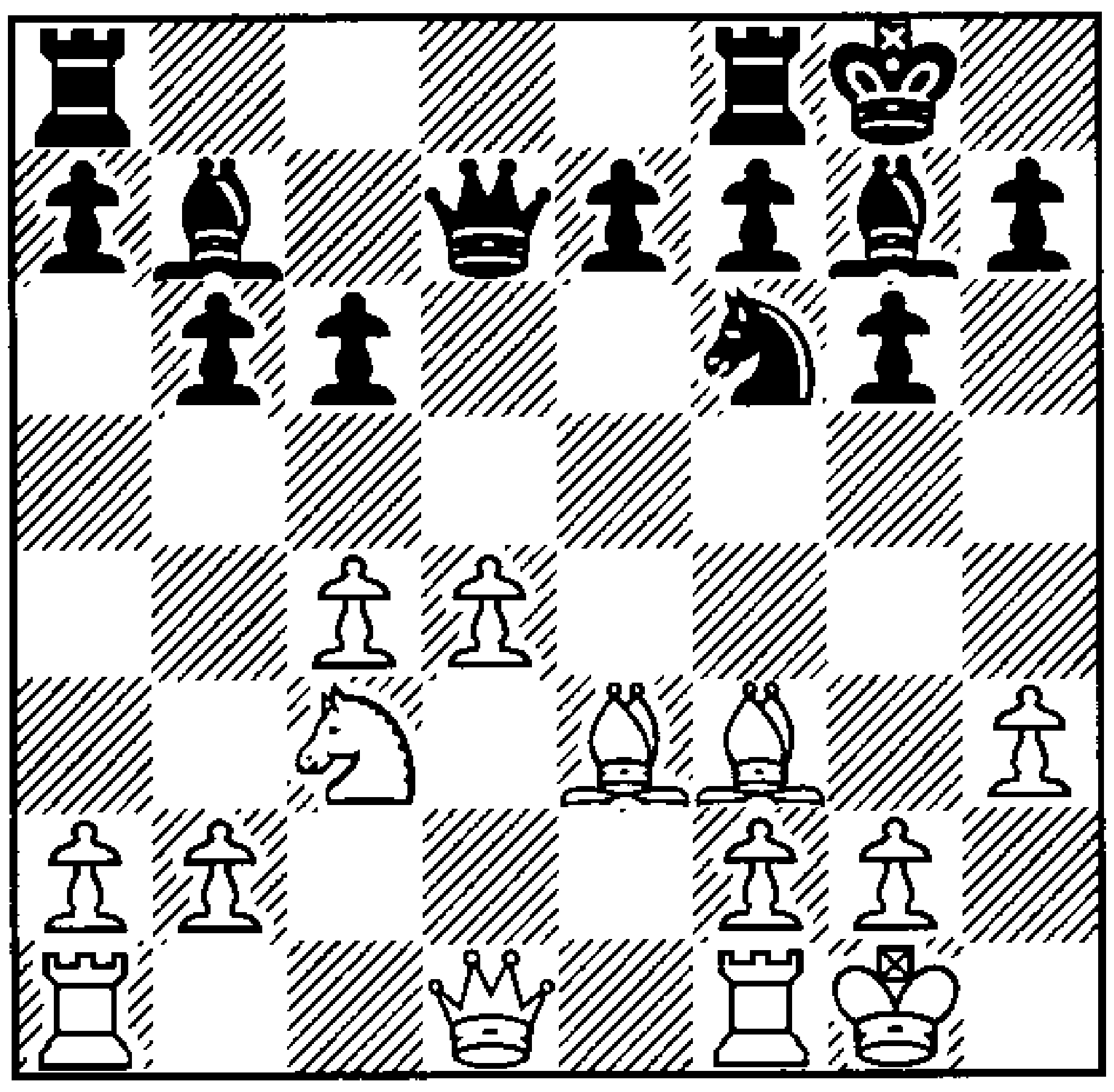
7 d3 (pointless is 7 ♘b5?! ♕b6 8 d4 ♘e4! 9 c5 ♕c6 10 ♘c3 a6 equalising) **7...c6?**

'A serious loss of time, instead of which 7...e5 was quite sufficient. If then 8 ♗e3, simply 8...♕d8 9 d4 ♘g4; or if 9 ♗e2, then 9...c5 (or even, more solid, 9...♗e7) with an approximately equal game.' (Alekhine)

8 ♗e3 ♕d7 9 d4 g6 10 ♗e2 ♗g7 (there was no point in playing 10...♘g4?! 11 ♗f4 ♗g7 12 h3) **11 h3 0-0 12 0-0 b6 13 ♗f3 ♗b7**

'The game is completely equal.' (Kotov)

Nothing of the sort: as a result of Black's inaccuracy on the seventh move he has emerged from the opening with a rather passive position.



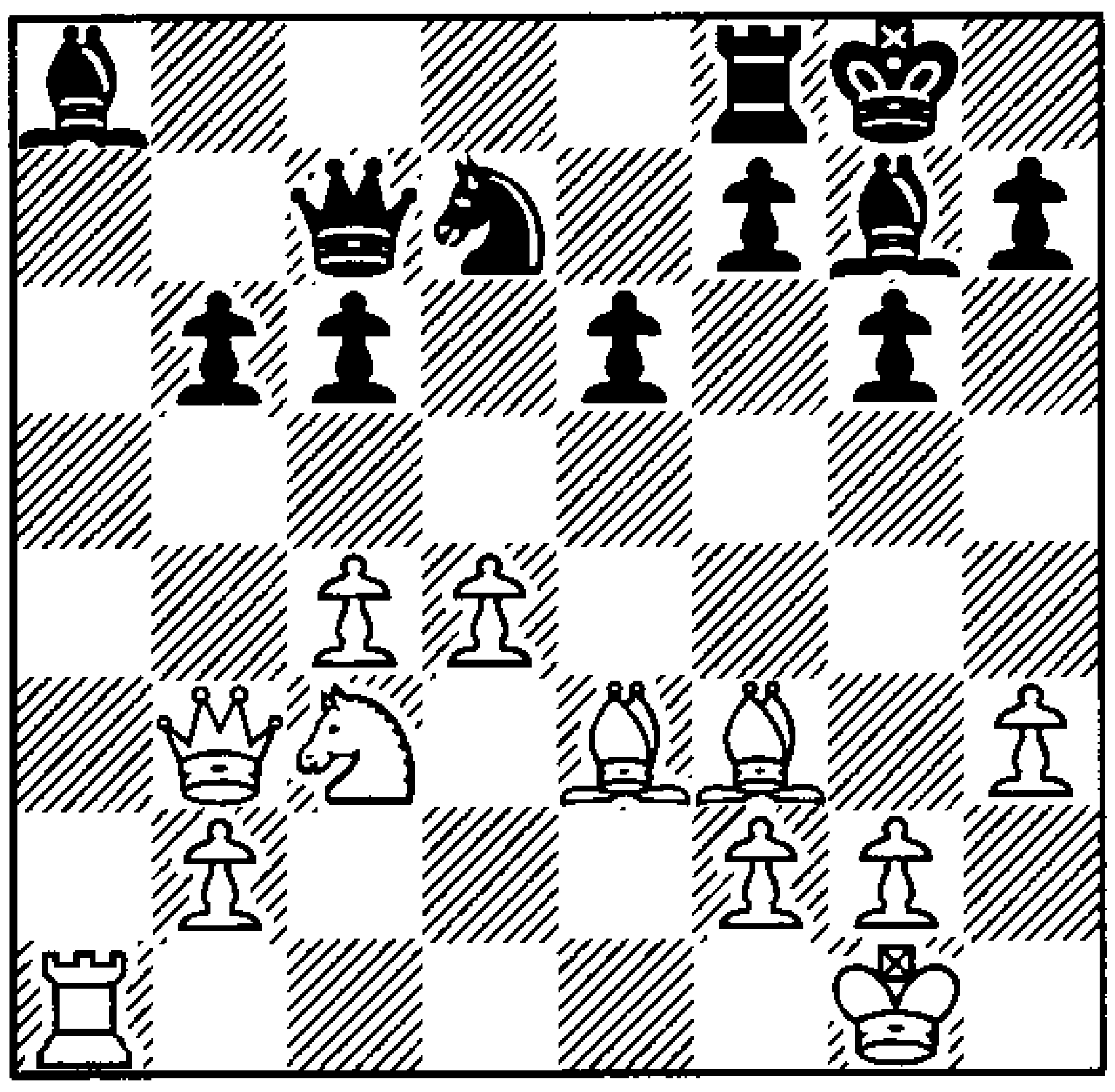
14 a4!

'In order to make a break in the centre more effective White tries first to weaken Black's b6.' (Alekhine) Well, this is one of the possible plans.

14...♖ad8

'Almost a sad necessity since after a4-a5 Black will have to deal with the threat of a5-a6; while, on the other hand, after the exchange on b6 he will be obliged to offer the exchange of at least one pair of rooks.' (Alekhine)

15 a5 ♕c7 16 ♕b3 ♘d7 17 axb6 axb6 18 ♖a7 ♖a8 (19 d5 was threatened) **19 ♖fa1 e6** (otherwise d4-d5 would be even more unpleasant) **20 ♖xa8 ♗xa8**



According to Alekhine, after 20...♖xa8 21 ♖xa8+ ♗xa8 22 ♕a3 ♗b7 23 b4 'White would have to face a technically easier problem than in the actual game.' But I think it was precisely here that Euwe would have held on...

21 d5!

This sudden breakthrough is a combination of strategy and tactics, typical of the fourth world champion! 'This is the only possibility of taking advantage of the weakness of Black's b6, created by the advance of White's a-pawn. White has no means of improving the excellent position of his pieces.' (Alekhine)

21...cxd5 22 cxd5 ♘c5

It transpires that if 22...♗xc3? White had prepared 23 d6!! ♕xd6 24 ♕xc3 ♗xf3 25 ♗h6! winning the exchange, while if 22...♘e5, then 23 ♗e4 with the threat of d5-d6.

'But a slightly better move was possible. After 22...exd5! Euwe would have had every justification to count on equality.' (Kotov) 'Black should have been able to gain a draw by 22...exd5 23 ♗xd5 ♗xc3 24 bxc3 ♗xd5 25 ♕xd5 ♕xc3 26 ♖c1 ♘f6 27 ♕d6 ♕b2.' (Botvinnik) However, in my view, stronger is 23 ♘xd5! ♗xd5 24 ♗xd5 with a clear advantage.

23 ♕c4 (but not 23 ♗xc5?! ♕xc5 24 dxe6 ♗xf3 25 exf7+ ♖xf7 26 gxf3 ♗xc3 27 ♖a7 ♕g5+ with perpetual check) **23...exd5 24 ♗xd5 ♗xd5?!**

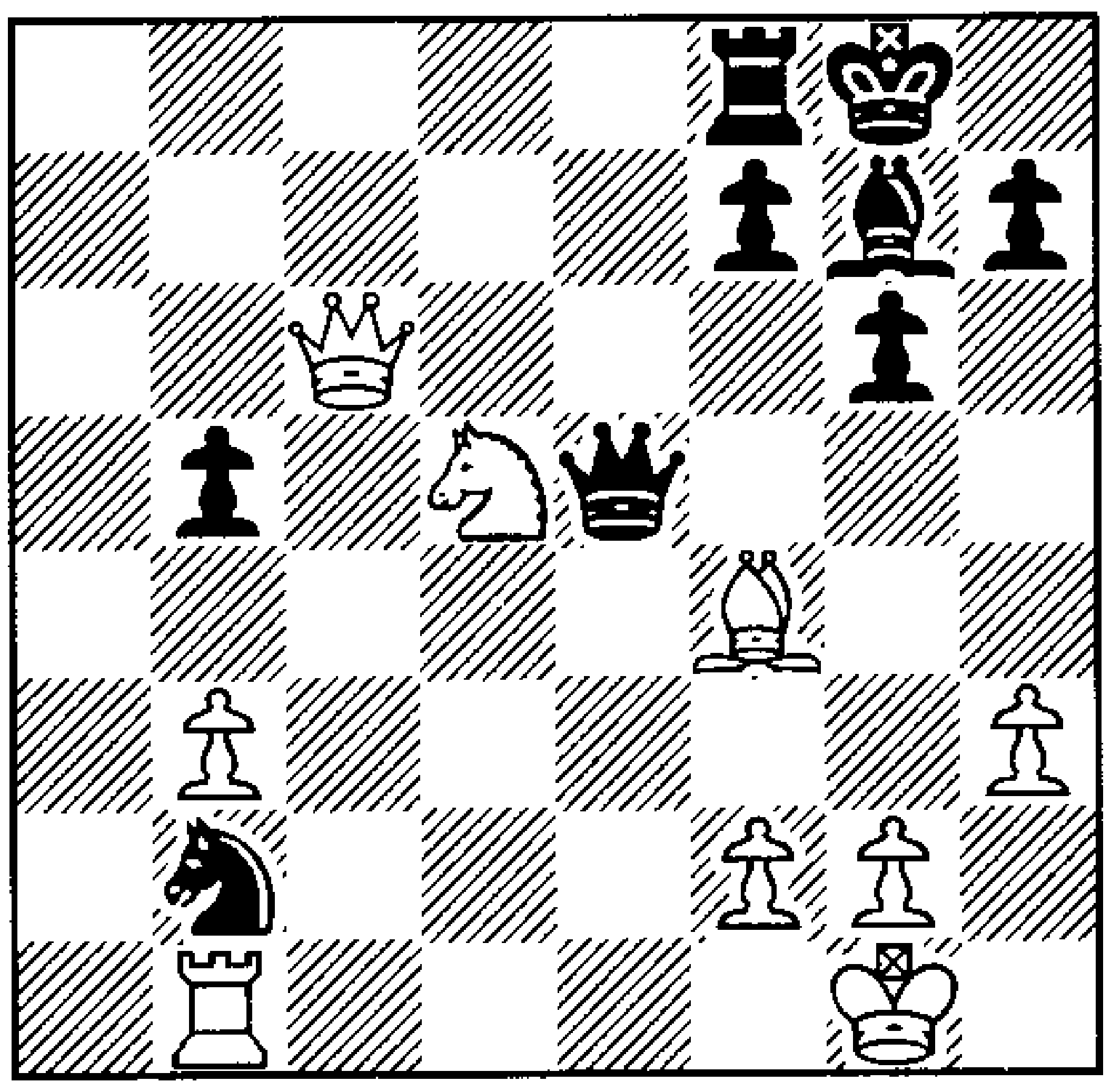
No one has commented on this move, but in my opinion it is an indifferent one and Black should have played 24...♗xc3!? 25 bxc3 ♗xd5 26 ♕xd5 ♘e6 with a slightly inferior (weak dark squares), but solid position – objectively things are closer to a draw.

25 ♘xd5 ♕e5!?

'Black selects the most aggressive line, which is certainly more promising than the purely passive 25...♕b7 26 ♖b1 ♘d7 27 ♕b5! with a clear advantage in space for White.' (Alekhine)

26 ♖b1 ♘a4! 27 b3 ♘b2 28 ♕c6 b5! 29 ♗f4!

Euwe was hoping to create counterplay, for example after 29 ♗c5 (29 ♕xb5? ♖d8 wins for Black) 29...♖d8 30 ♘e7+ ♔h8 31 ♕xb5 ♕e4! 32 ♖f1 ♘d3. But now it transpires that this entire venture was rather dangerous for Black.



29...♕e6?

'The only adequate defence consisted in 29...♕e2!, which would be answered by 30 ♖f1! still leaving Black with the following weak spots: the b5-pawn; the square f6; last but not least, the insecure position of the knight at b2.' (Alekhine) I would have played 30 ♗g3! The knight at d5 is very strong, but it is not clear how serious White's advantage is – after, say, 30...♕d3 31 ♖e1 ♕xb3 32 ♗d6! he unexpectedly begins an attack.

30 ♕xb5 (now he can simply pick up a pawn) **30...♕e4**

'If 30...♖d8, then 31 ♖c1! ♖xd5 32 ♕b8+ (this is why 29 ♗f4 was necessary) 32...♗f8 33 ♗h6 ♕d6 (or 33...♕e7 34 ♖c8) 34 ♕xd6 ♖xd6 35 ♖c8 and wins.' (Alekhine)

31 ♖c1 ♘d3 (31...♖d8 32 ♗g5!) **32 ♕c4! ♕e2** (of course, not 32...♗d4?? 33 ♘f6+) **33 ♖f1 ♘xf4** (33...♖e8 34 ♗e3!) **34 ♕xf4**

Inferior is 34 ♘xf4? ♕xc4 35 bxc4 ♖c8 36 ♖c1 ♗h6 with a draw. Now too Black has some counterplay for the pawn (a long-range bishop!), and the only question is how successfully he can resist. It is not easy for White to win, with or without the queens – I saved a similar endgame with a c-pawn against Geller (47th USSR Championship, Minsk 1979). But a b-pawn is nevertheless more remote, which is worse for the defending side.

34...♕b5 35 ♕f3! (35 ♕c4?! ♖b8 is inaccurate) **35...♖b8 36 ♖b1 ♕a6 37 ♖d1?!**

'This attempt to repeat moves, due to a slight shortage of time, leads to extremely interesting complications. After the simple 37 b4 White would not have much trouble in taking advantage from the possession of a passed pawn. For instance, 37...♕c4 38 ♘e7+ ♔f8 39 ♘c6 ♖b6 40 b5! ♖xb5 41 ♕a3+ and wins.' (Alekhine)

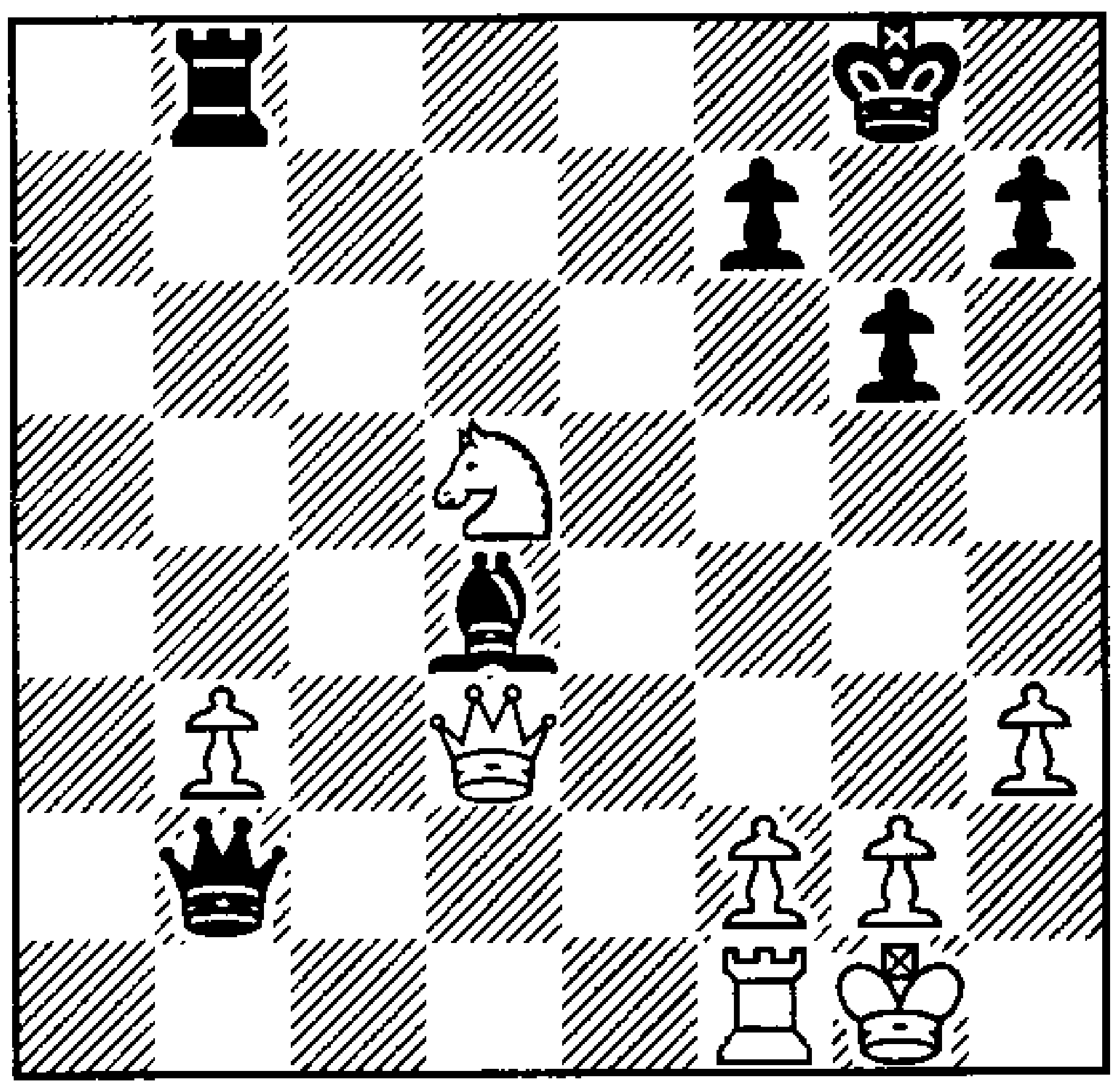
37...♕a3 38 ♖b1 ♕a2 (after 38...♗b2 39 b4 ♕xf3 40 gxf3 it is not possible to play 40...♗d4? because of 41 ♘e7+ ♔f8 42 ♘c6)

39 ♕d3 ♗d4

Interesting counterplay against the f2-pawn. 'This counterattack only compromises Black's king's position. But it is difficult to suggest a satisfactory line of play, for White is threatening simply to advance his passed pawn.' (Alekhine)

40 ♖f1 ♕b2!?

A strong manoeuvre: if 40...♕a7, then 41 b4!, whereas now this is dubious because of 41...♖e8! Here the game was adjourned and White sealed his move.



41 ♘e7+!

'This sealed move initiates the final attack which, after a dozen moves, leads practically by force to the win of the queen for two pieces.' (Alekhine) Now begins the resumption – the most interesting part of this game. Although White carried out a colossal combination, in fact here things are not so simple: the computer picks up nuances that escaped the attention of painstaking analysts.

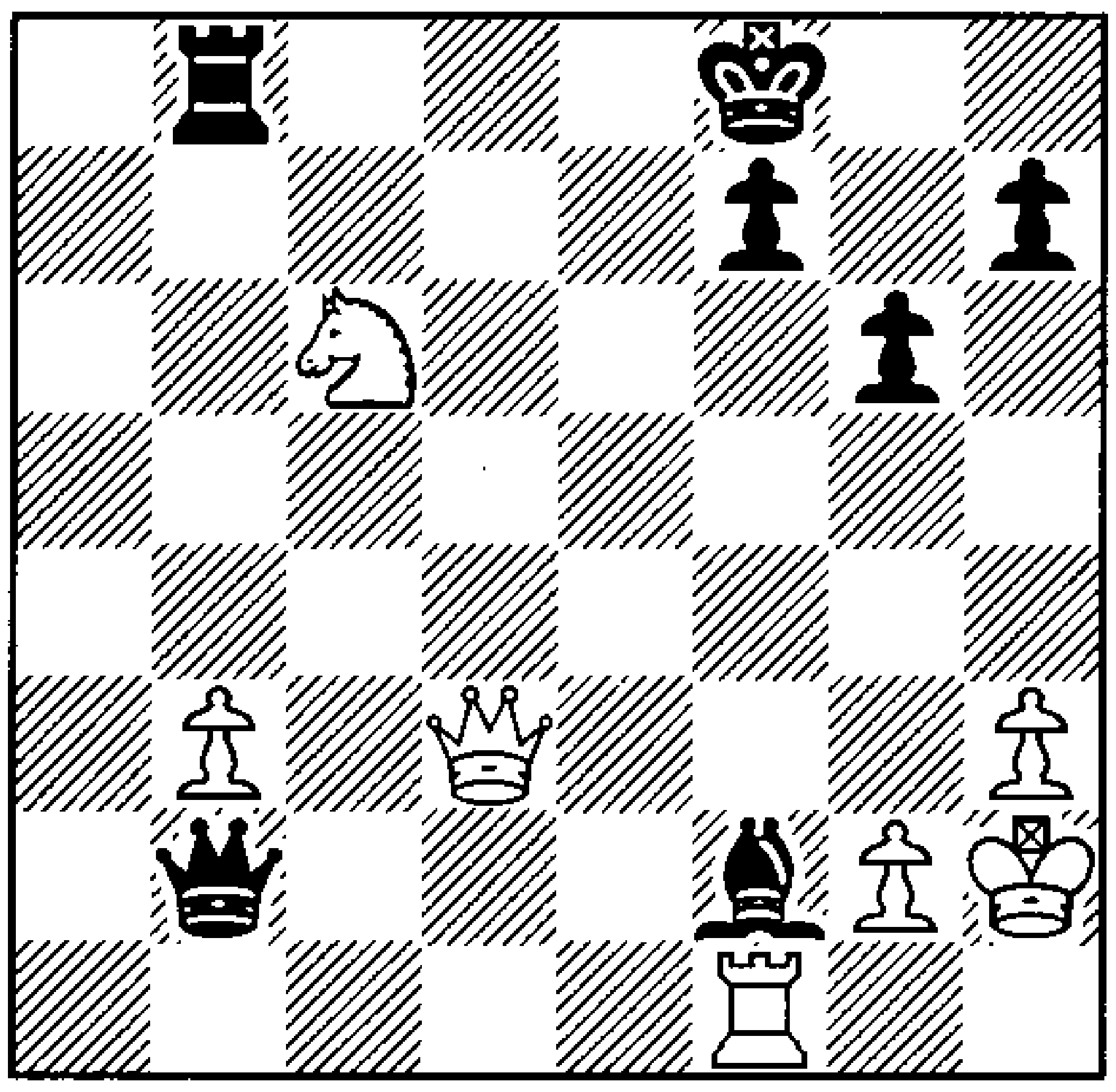
41...♔f8!

'The only move. Hopeless would be 41...♔g7 42 ♘f5+! gxf5 43 ♕g3+ and 44 ♕xb8, or 41...♔h8 42 ♘c6 ♗xf2+ 43 ♖xf2 ♕c1+ 44 ♔h2 ♕xc6 45 ♖xf7 etc.' (Alekhine)

42 ♘c6 ♗xf2+ 43 ♔h2?

'Only here.' (Kotov) 'The idea of this pawn sacrifice (instead of 43 ♖xf2 ♕c1+ 44 ♕f1! ♕xc6 45 ♖xf7+ ♔g8 46 ♖f3 with very problematic winning chances) will become apparent only after the 48th move. The ensuing knight manoeuvre is very spectacular.' (Alekhine)

All the commentators attach an exclamation mark to 43 ♔h2, but in my opinion 43 ♖xf2! was in fact strongest, remaining a pawn up with fair winning chances (roughly 50-50). Whereas now these chances could have melted like March snow...



43...♖e8?

Apparently, the decisive error: too passive! 'If 43...♖b7, then 44 ♕f3 ♗b6 (or 44...♗c5 45 ♕d5) 45 ♘d8!, winning at least the exchange,' writes Alekhine, not noticing the very strong reply 45...♕e5+! 46 g3 (if 46 ♔h1 ♗xd8! 47 ♕xb7 ♗c7 48 ♔g1 ♕d4+ with a draw) 46...♖e7 47 ♘xf7 ♕e2+ 48 ♕xe2 ♖xe2+ 49 ♔h1 ♔g7 and a draw!

After 43...♖b7! (a 'machine' move!) 44 ♕f3 ♗b6 I had to seek other ways. If 45 ♘d4 Black is saved by both 45...♖d7 46 ♘e6+ ♔g8 47 ♕a8+ ♗d8 48 ♘xd8 ♕e5+ 49 ♔h1 ♕e8 and 45...♕xd4 46 ♕xb7 ♕e5+ 47 g3 ♕b2+ 48 ♕g2 ♕xb3. More cunning is the quiet move 45 ♔h1! with a mass of diverse threats, for example: 45...♖d7 46 ♕g4 ♖d5 47 ♕b4+ ♗c5 48 ♕c4 ♕d2 49 ♘d8! (a ferocious knight!) 49...♔g8 50 ♘xf7 ♕d4 and although White retains an advantage, the position is nevertheless closer to a draw: after the coming exchanges he will remain with an extra pawn that is hard to convert.

Thus, the spectacular Alekhine attack was by no means forced and not even fully correct...

44 ♕f3 ♖e2

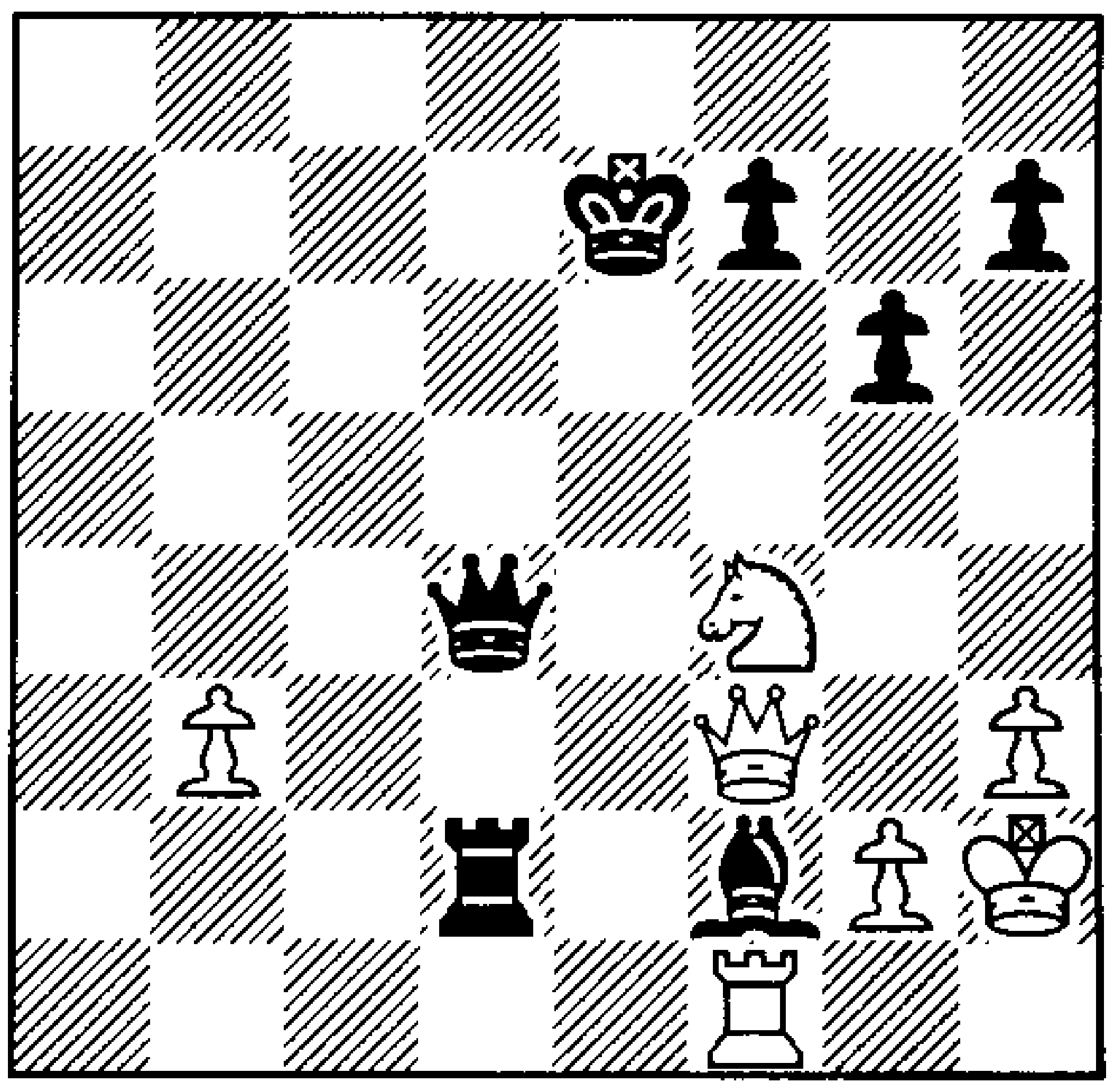
'Again the only move. But had the white king gone to h1 on the 43rd move, then 44...♖e1 would have saved Black.' (Alekhine)

45 ♘d4! ♖d2 46 ♘e6+ ♔e7 47 ♘f4

With the threat of 48 ♘d3. I think that the leaps of this knight must have had Euwe's head spinning: each time this incredibly frisky piece creates new threats!

47...♕d4

'Or 47...♕c2 48 ♖a1 and the exposed king would succumb to the combined attack of the three white pieces.' (Alekhine) And if 47...♗d4?, then 48 ♕b7+ ♔e8 49 ♕c8+ ♔e7 50 ♕c7+ ♔e8 51 ♘d3! ♕xb3 52 ♖e1+ ♔f8 53 ♕d8+ or 51...♖xg2+ 52 ♔h1 wins.



48 ♔h1!!

This ultra-brilliant quiet move overwhelms

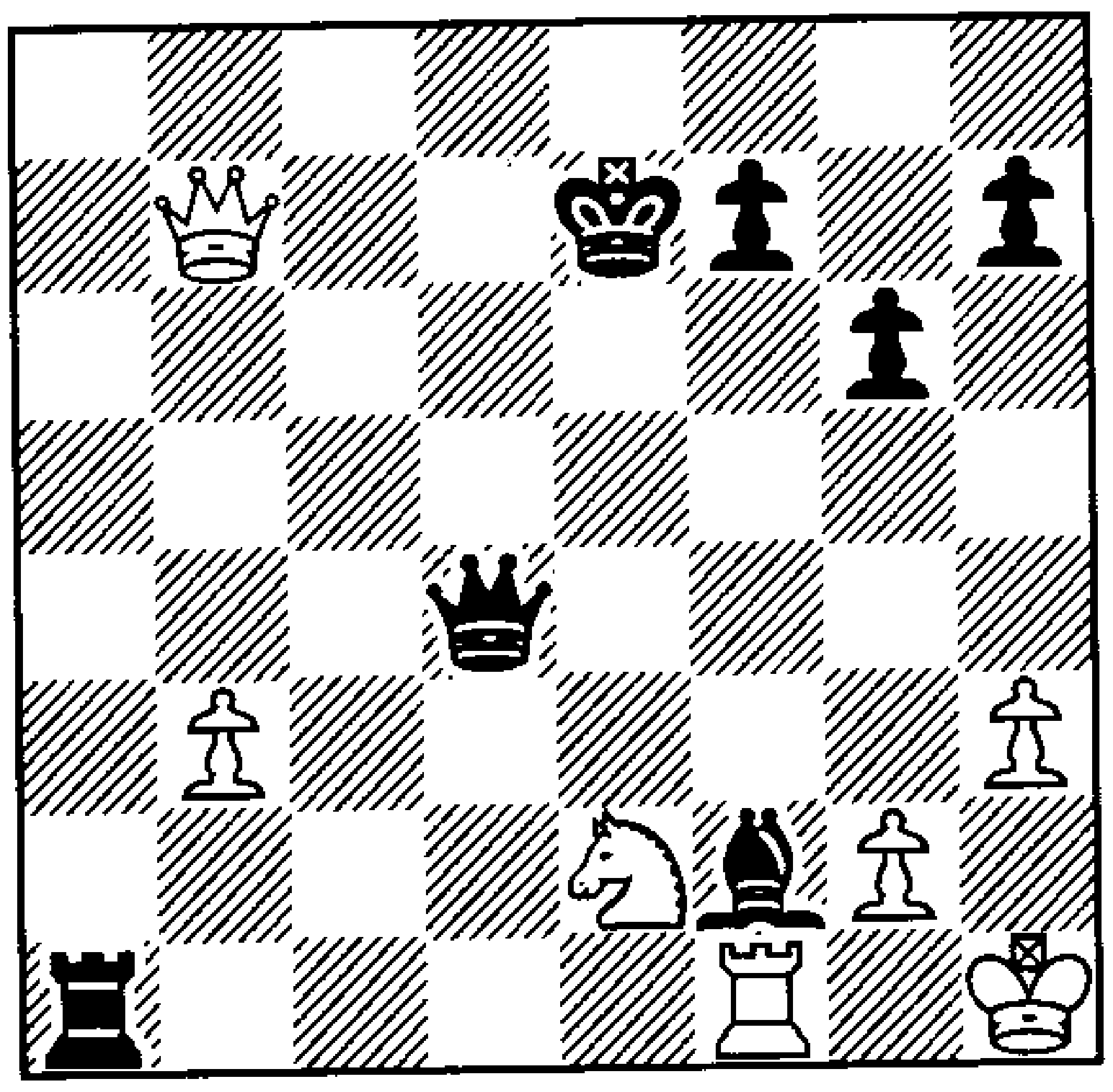
Euwe on the spot. Now 49 ♘e2 is threatened.

48...♖a2?

This looks like a blunder. 48...h5? 49 ♘e2 ♖d1 50 ♕b7+ would have come to roughly the same thing. But if Black plays 48...♗h4, then according to Alekhine 'he loses as follows: 49 ♕b7+ ♕d7 (49...♔d6 50 ♕b8+) 50 ♕b4+ ♔e8 51 ♘e6! ♗e7 (*51...♖d6 52 ♕xb4 ♖xe6 53 ♕xh7 – G. K.*) 52 ♕b8+ ♗d8 53 ♘xd8 ♕xd8 54 ♕e5+ ♕e7 55 ♕h8+ ♔d7 56 ♕xh7 ♖f2 57 ♖d1+ ♔c7 58 ♕h8 etc.'

But for a couple of minutes it was unclear to me (and to the computer) how White wins after 48...♗h4 49 ♕b7+ ♔e8! Only another grandiose knight leap was able to help: 50 ♘e6!! fxe6 51 ♕f7+ ♔d8 52 ♕f8+ ♔c7 53 ♖f7+ ♔b6 54 ♕b8+ ♔c5 55 ♖c7+ ♔d5 56 ♖d7+ ♔e4 57 ♕b7+ ♔f5 58 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 59 ♕xh7 winning. This means that 43...♖e8? was after all the decisive mistake!

49 ♘e2! (Euwe had probably reckoned only on 49 ♘d3? ♖a1 50 ♕e2+ ♗e3) **49...♖a1 50 ♕b7+!** (but not 50 ♘xd4? ♖xf1+ 51 ♔h2 ♗g1+, regaining the queen)



50...♔f6?!

Nevertheless more tenacious was 50...♔f8 51 ♘xd4 ♖xf1+ 52 ♔h2 ♗g1+ 53 ♔g3 ♗f2+ 54 ♔f3 ♗xd4+ 55 ♔e2 (55 ♔e4 ♗f6) 55...♖f2+ 56 ♔e1 ♔g7! and White has to bring in his reserve – the passed b-pawn.

51 ♘xd4 (the arguments are at an end: White is a queen up) **51...♖xf1+ 52 ♔h2 ♗g1+ 53 ♔g3 ♗f2+ 54 ♔f3 ♗xd4+ 55 ♔e4 ♖d1** (56 ♕a6+ was threatened) **56 ♕d5?!**

'The simple 56 ♕c6+ followed by 57 ♕c2 won immediately. This is the only (fortunately negligible) omission I committed in this unusually difficult game.' (Alekhine)

56...♔e7

The pawn ending after 56...♖e1+ 57 ♔xd4 ♖d1+ 58 ♔c5 ♖xd5+ 59 ♔xd5 ♔e7 60 ♔c6 is also hopeless.

57 g4 h5 58 gxh5 f5+ 59 ♔f3 ♖d3+ 60 ♔e2 ♖e3+ 61 ♔d2 ♖e4 62 hxg6 1-0

A worthy finish to the match! In this game the potential of Alekhine's pieces creates an enormous impression.

Here Euwe, by his own admission, mentally reconciled himself to defeat: 'The tension of the struggle had become unbearable for me.' Alekhine also won the 24th and 25th games, and with them the match: 15½-9½ (+10 -4 =11). A convincing victory!

'The result of the return match gives a comprehensively clear reply: Alekhine is not simply a very strong player, but the strongest in the world... He played wonderfully, and to lose to such an opponent is by no means a disgrace... He was excellent in all stages, but most of all I admire his mastery of playing adjourned games,' wrote Euwe immediately after the match, and years later he recalled:

'The class demonstrated by Alekhine was at a level that he never again achieved – neither in the AVRO tournament, nor in other events. Where did Alekhine play more strongly – in the return match or in San Remo and Bled? A difficult question. These are qualitatively different competitions: in San Remo and Bled the emphasis was on the fight for an opening advantage and a subsequent "blitzkrieg", while in the return match the play was of a more protracted nature.'

Undefeated

After regaining the title of champion, Alekhine did not give up the cherished dream of visiting his motherland, seeing his sister and his brother Alexey, and strolling around the places of his youth – the quiet Moscow lanes... But one letter to the newspaper *64* (cf. p.435) proved insufficient to redeem his sins, and in 1936 he sent another couple of penitential letters with 'greetings to the new, iron Russia' and an entreaty about collaboration:

'For me it would be an enormous joy to again play my part in the chess construction of the USSR. I hope that my mistakes in the past, of which I am now fully aware, will not prove an insurmountable obstacle... (There follows a list of mistakes! – G. K.) I so deeply regret these mistakes, that in recent years my indifferent attitude to the gigantic growth of Soviet achievements has transformed into admiration.'

It is not known with whom Commissar Krylenko consulted in the Kremlin, but the question of Alekhine contributing to the Soviet newspaper *64* was not in fact resolved – these letters remained unanswered and came to light... only 31 years later (in the magazine *Shakhmaty v SSSR* 1967, No.9).

Meanwhile, the 'gigantic growth of Soviet achievements' was expressed in the brutal Stalinist repressions, which were especially extensive in 1937-39. In the summer of 1938 the formidable Krylenko was shot... And in the autumn the secret police retrieved from the 18-year-old archival dust 'case No.228 against A. A. Alekhine with a supplement of 10 pages.' However, these were meaningless difficulties: the Russian chess genius did not in fact travel to the USSR.

...On the conclusion of the return match, the champion was reminded of the decision of the 14th FIDE congress (Stockholm 1937) to recognise the official challenger to the throne to be grandmaster Flohr, who had 'defeated' Capablanca on the number of votes cast to him: 8-5. Initially Alekhine turned Flohr down, since precisely at that time an offer was received from Montevideo to stage his match with Capablanca. Alas, on this occasion too nothing came of this: the champion demanded that the conditions of the 1927 match should be repeated, whereas the ex-champion wanted a more favourable distribution of the prize fund. Alekhine wrote angrily that the Cuban did not in fact want to play, and that the entire clamour over his challenge served as an advertisement for 'an ageing chess prima donna'.

However, he also did not come to play Flohr, although in May 1938 the champion and the challenger signed an agreement about a match in Prague, which was due to take place in the autumn of 1939 in various towns of Czechoslovakia. The prize fund was guaranteed by the well-known footwear factory Tomas Bata. But in late September 1938 all the plans were disrupted by the notorious 'Munich agreement', allowing Hitler's Germany to seize from Czechoslovakia part of its territory, and soon also to occupy the entire country...

The major, truly symbolic event of the end of that decade was the famous AVRO tournament (Holland 2-27 November 1938), where the best eight players on the planet battled it out in a double-round event: 1-2. Keres and Fine – 8½ out of 14; 3. Botvinnik – 7½; 4-6. Alekhine, Reshevsky and Euwe – 7; 7. Capablanca – 6; 8. Flohr – 4½. The play was held in various towns, and the constant travelling took its toll on the 'old men', the third and fourth world champions, but at the same time it was clear that new stars had begun shining in the chess sky.

I will describe this historic tournament in more detail in the second volume, and I will merely mention that Alekhine suffered three defeats (against Botvinnik and twice against Fine), and will dwell on two games that were especially important for him. It stands to reason that these were the clashes with Capablanca: the time had come to settle old scores!

'During the last 11 years meetings between Alekhine and Capablanca have been extremely rare,' Tartakower wrote in his report on the tournament. 'Their personal enmity, based on fact that the world was too small for two such ambitious natures, who should have been separated from each other not only by continents, but also by different centuries (*that's it: I remember that it was once said about Karpov and me that two tigers find it crowded in one cage! – G. K.*), shows through in every move and adversely affects the quality of their play. That was the case in Nottingham 1936, and that was also the case here...'

And about their duel in the second round: 'Again Alekhine's game is the only one unfinished, but on this occasion he has to try and save it... Ten minutes before the resumption both players are already in the hall and both look rather exhausted. It is obvious that both have been up all night studying the subtleties of the adjourned position. But from the very first moves it is clear that the Cuban has not delved too deeply into all the nooks and crannies. Soon he even puts on his "glasses No.2". But this is a sign of dissatisfaction... and after a fine reply by Alekhine he immediately agrees to a draw.'

But *what* an agreement that was! Let's read the Dutch press: 'Alekhine made the last move in the game – placed his bishop close to Capablanca's king, stood up from the board and began strolling about while he awaited the reply. Capablanca sat down at the board (during the half-hour adjournment session the two players had barely spent more than a few minutes together at the board), scrutinised the position and called over the tournament director Landau. They whispered together for a few seconds, and Landau went out into the passage; but he immediately returned, went up to Alekhine and whispered something in his ear. Alekhine nodded his head affirmatively. Then Landau went up to the stage and, in turn, nodded to Capablanca. The inscription "Draw" appeared on the demonstration board. It was this secret word that had been communicated by whisper.'

No less dramatic was their second encounter. 'Not a struggle, but a kind of wild dance of the pieces was seen in the French game Alekhine-Capablanca. The world champion decided, apparently, to celebrate worthily the 50th birthday of his Cuban colleague. Not knowing whether he should press on the strategic or the tactical pedals, Capablanca lost the thread, and with it... a piece, and to crown all his misfortunes – his control of the clock: on the 35th move his flag fell.' (Tartakower)

Game 147

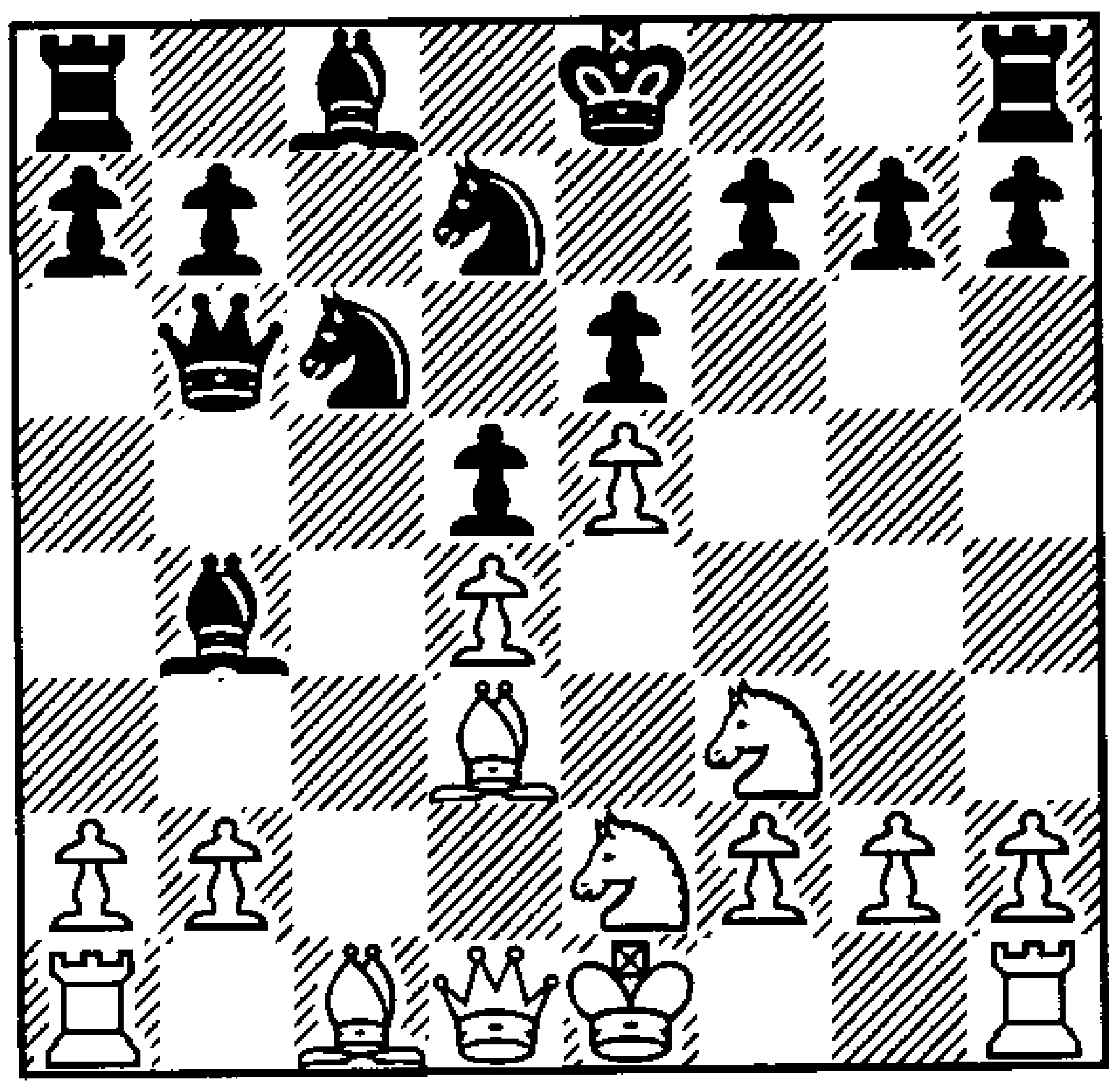
A.Alekhine-J.R.Capablanca

AVRO Tournament, Holland 1938

French Defence C06

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 ♘f6 4 e5 ♘fd7 5 ♗d3 c5 6 c3 ♘c6 7 ♘e2 ♕b6 (nowadays the immediate 7...cxd4 8 cxd4 f6! leads to sharp debates) **8 ♘f3 cxd4 9 cxd4 ♗b4+?!**

Here too 9...f6 is better.



10 ♔f1!?

'This leads to more spirited play, whereas after 10 ♗d2 Black can force the exchange of queens. But in this particular game I was aiming to win at all costs, because I had some kind of premonition that this would be my last game with Capablanca. It is true that it might have happened differently, since we could still have met at the Olympiad in Buenos Aires (1939), but he avoided this meeting.' (Alekhine)

10...♗e7 (10...0-0? 11 ♗xh7+!; 10...f6?! 11 ♘f4!) **11 a3 ♘f8?!**

'The start of a complicated regrouping which does not lead to a satisfactory result.'

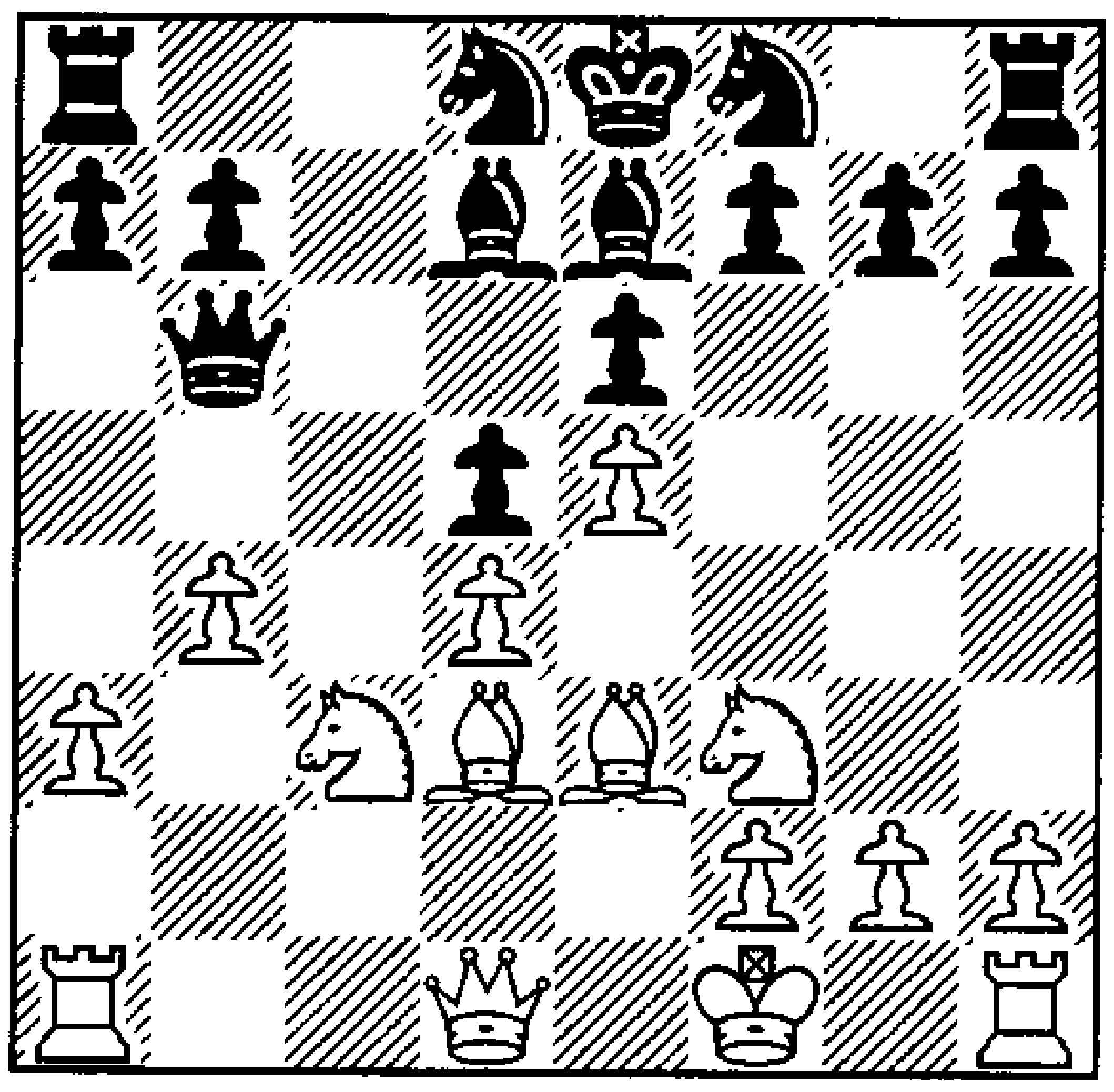
(Alekhine) After 11...0-0 Alekhine suggested 12 ♕c2 and Euwe – 12 h4! But perhaps 11...a5!? was sounder.

12 b4 ♗d7 13 ♗e3 ♘d8?!

Hoping for ...♗d7-b5. Panov recommended 13...♖c8 14 ♖c1 a5, and Kotov – 13...f5, adding 'It is hard to play an important game on the day of your 50th birthday.'

14 ♘c3

'Black's position is already extremely difficult.' (Panov)



14...a5?!

'A very unfortunate manoeuvre, but such moves are usually made in already compromised positions.' (Alekhine) If 14...♘g6, then 15 h4! 0-0 16 h5 ♘h8 17 ♕c2 (Euwe), while if 14...a6 or 14...♖c8, then 15 ♘a4! is strong.

15 ♘a4! (but not 15 b5 a4 with some counterplay) **15...♕a7**

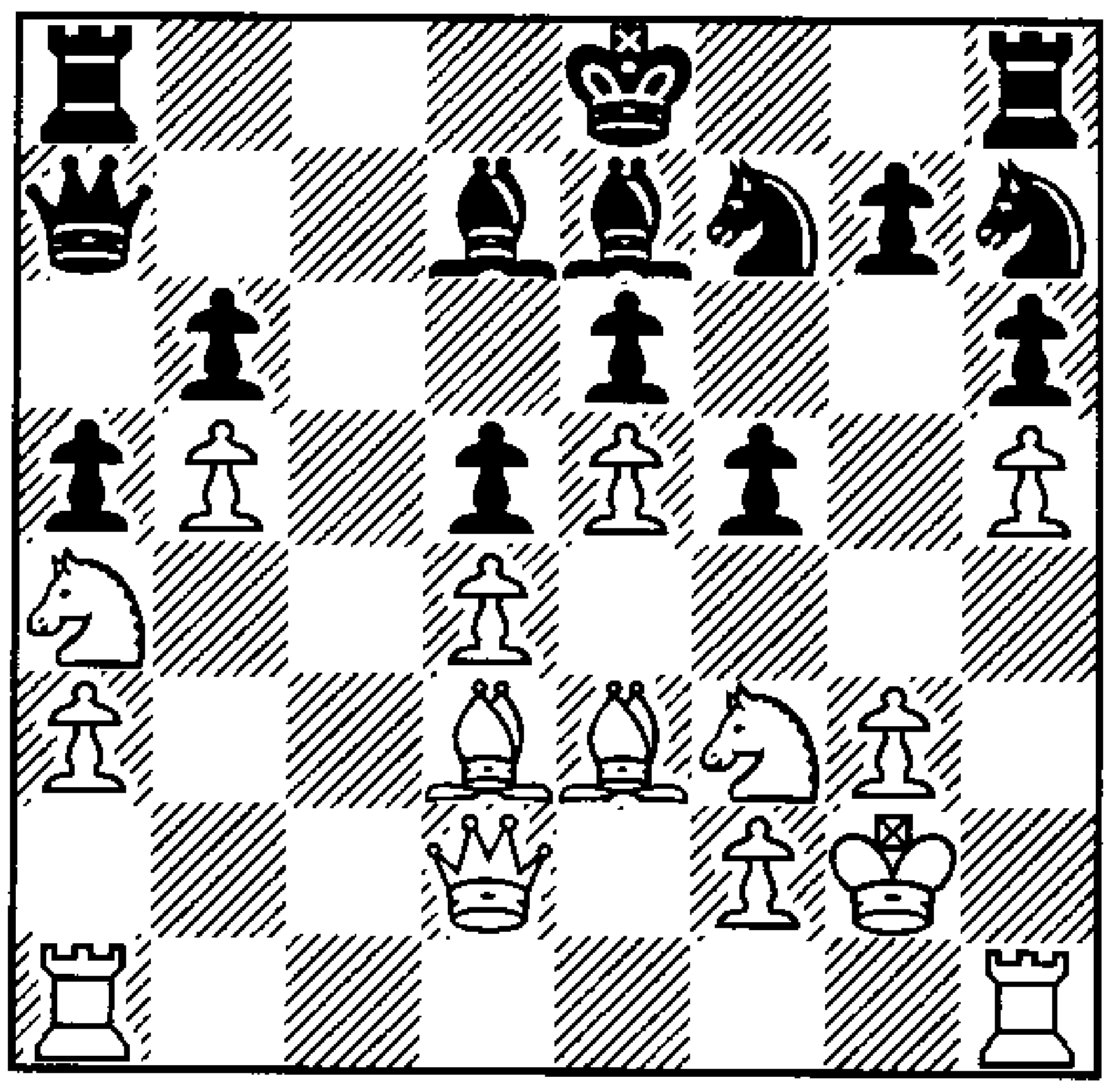
15...♗xa4 16 ♕xa4+ ♘c6 17 ♔e2! is clearly to White's advantage, for example: 17...♘d7 18 ♖hb1 (Euwe), 17...♖c8 18 b5 ♘a7 19 ♖hc1 ♘d7 20 ♖xc8+ ♘xc8 21 ♖c1, or 17...♘g6 18 h4 0-0 19 b5! ♘d8 20 ♕c2 (Panov).

16 b5 b6

'Now the position on the queenside is completely fixed and White needs to arouse the kingside into action.' (Alekhine)

17 g3 f5 18 ♔g2 ♘f7 (beginning a battle 'for' and 'against' ...g7-g5) **19 ♕d2!** (19 ♖c1?! g5!) **19...h6 20 h4 ♘h7 21 h5!**

'Completely suppressing the threat of ...g7-g5. It is true that this move gives the black knight temporary use of g5, but on the other hand it secures the g6-square.' (Alekhine)



21...♘fg5 (21...0-0!?) **22 ♘h4 ♘e4 23 ♕b2 ♔f7?!**

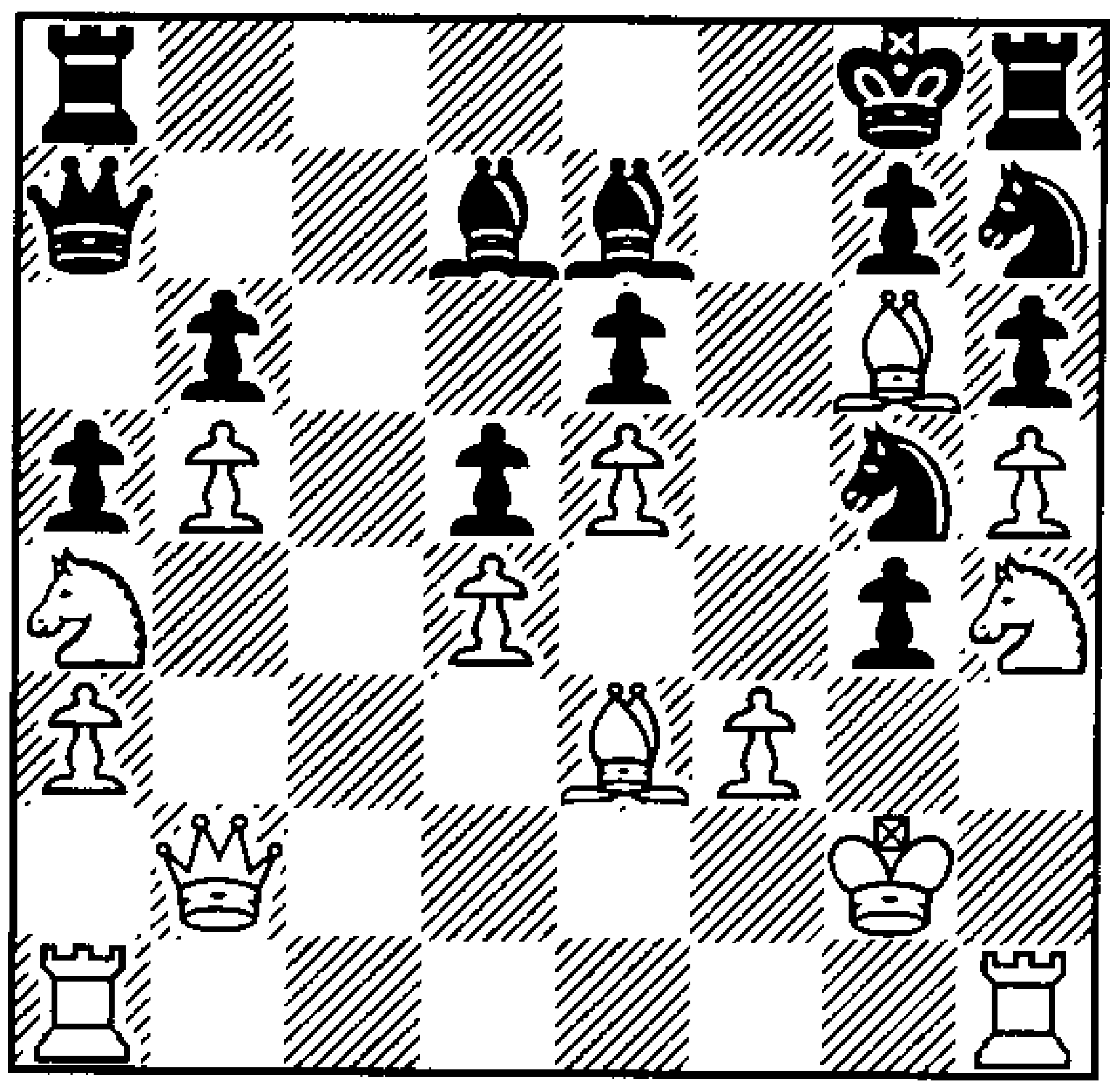
'Black cannot prevent the knight from occupying a dominating position at g6, since 23...♗xh4?! 24 gxh4! would cost the life of the knight at e4.' (Alekhine) But, in Kotov's opinion, 23...0-0 was more tenacious.

24 f3 ♘eg5

'Now the breaching of Black's kingside begins.' (Alekhine)

25 g4 fxg4 26 ♗g6+! ♔g8

If 26...♔f8, then 27 ♖hf1! is good, for example: 27...g3 28 f4 ♘e4 29 f5! ♗xh4 30 fxe6+ (Panov), or 27...gxf3+ 28 ♘xf3 ♔g8 29 ♘xg5 ♘xg5 30 ♗xg5 ♗xg5 31 ♘xb6!! ♕xb6 32 ♕f2 winning (Euwe).



27 f4! ♘f3?!

Desperation! After 27...♘f7 Alekhine was also intending 28 ♗xh7+ ♖xh7 (28...♔xh7? 29 ♕b1+ ♔g8 30 ♘g6) 29 ♘g6. I agree, that after the approximate 29...♗d8 30 ♖ac1 ♘h8 31 ♕e2 ♘xg6 32 hxg6 ♖h8 33 ♕xg4 ♖c8 34 ♖c6! Black is in trouble. But apparently even better is Panov's idea of 28 ♗d3! (threatening ♘g6) 28...♗xh4 29 ♖xh4 followed by the doubling of rooks on the g-file and a winning attack.

28 ♗xh7+! ♖xh7 (or 28...♔xh7 29 ♕b1+ ♔g8 30 ♘g6) **29 ♘g6 ♗d8 30 ♖ac1!**

'At first sight it was simpler to play 30 ♔g3 and ♔xg4, trapping the knight, but then Black would have gained quite good chances by 30...♖c8 31 ♖ac1 (31 ♔xg4 ♖c4!, saving the piece) 31...♖c4! and the black knight is a long way from being lost. The move in the game, by depriving Black of counterplay on the c-file, eliminates this chance.' (Alekhine)

30...♗e8 (there isn't anything more useful) **31 ♔g3! ♕f7 32 ♔xg4 ♘h4**

Or 32...♘g5 33 fxg5 ♕f5+ 34 ♔g3 ♗xg5 35 ♖cf1 winning.

33 ♘xh4 ♕xh5+ 34 ♔g3 ♕f7 35 ♘f3

And in this hopeless position, while playing 35...h5, for only the second time in his life (the first was in his game with Ryumin, Moscow 1935) Capa lost on time. Not a bad 'present' for his birthday! The overall score of decisive games between these historic opponents was fixed forever at 7-7. Caissa is severe, but just...

So, since Flohr was no longer one of the challengers, the organisers of the AVRO tournament proclaimed that the winner would receive the preferential right to a match with Alekhine. But at the opening ceremony the champion rigidly declared that, although he would accept the challenge of the winner, if the latter could guarantee the due 'competitive and financial conditions', in principle he considered that he had the right to play with any well-known grandmaster who could raise the necessary prize fund.

'I took good note of this: it was then that I had to decide whether to challenge the world champion to a match,' writes Botvinnik. 'I didn't know when I would see Alekhine again...'

It was Keres who was declared the AVRO winner, on the tie-break – and he immediately requested an audience with Alekhine, in order to have discussions about a match: little Estonia (apparently, following the example of Cuba and Holland) was ready to support its hero... Alekhine replied with an agreement, but they did not in fact meet – Paul waited in vain for the champion in the hall of the Carlton Hotel.

Keres had been forestalled by Botvinnik! This is how he described his meeting with Alekhine: 'I invited Flohr with me: an authoritative witness was needed – wasn't Alekhine linked with the white emigrants? Caution was necessary. But since the time of Nottingham, Alexander Alexandrovich had related warmly to me. Alekhine the chess player sensed my admiration – this disarmed him. No sooner had we seen each other before the tournament in Amsterdam, when he began talking about a new star – Smyslov (Alekhine had found a mistake in an analysis published by Smyslov!). Now too he was affable with us both, since earlier he had been intending to play a match with Flohr (Flohr, of course, was upset, that it was not him, but someone else who was negotiating about a match, but he didn't let it show). Over a cup of tea the conditions were quickly agreed: if the match was to take place in Moscow, three months before the champion would be invited to some tournament – to adapt to the conditions in Moscow...'

Irrespective of the outcome of the match, Alekhine would receive $6,700 (i.e. two thirds of the prize fund of $10,000). As Botvinnik writes, they agreed to keep this meeting a strict secret, shook hands firmly and parted... never to see each other again.

And here is another important piece of evidence by Botvinnik: 'After the tournament a meeting of the players was held – a unique one in the history of chess. Simultaneously in the hall were seven players (Alekhine and Capablanca took turns to be present). They discussed the question of setting up a club of the eight strongest, so that the club should confirm the rules of matches for the world championship. Alekhine was agreeable to a prize fund of $10,000, with one exception: Capablanca would have to raise $18,000 (i.e. 10,000 in gold – on these conditions their match in 1927 was held). Each member of the club would have the formal right to challenge the champion. Fine and Euwe were entrusted with preparing and circulating the draft rules (no one suggested enlisting FIDE in the solving of these questions).'

Alas, all these ventures, like many, many others, were buried by the Second World War...

In the early autumn of 1939 Alekhine and Capablanca saw each another for the last time in their lives – at the Olympiad in unforgettable Buenos Aires. There they had an extremely sharp rivalry in the battle for the best result on board 1: both went through undefeated, Alekhine scoring 12½ out of 16, and Capa 11½... but only the games played in the final counted, and here Capa had 8½ out of 11, and Alekhine 'only' 7½ out of 10. So as not to spoil things, the ex-champion even missed the France-Cuba match. 'On the day of the match,' an eye-witness recalled, 'Alekhine arrived in the tournament hall half an hour early and walked resolutely around the stage, working himself up for the game with Capablanca. He was beside himself when the Cubans turned out with a reserve. Alekhine crushed him in 20 moves, but he was unable to hide his anger.'

As a result the French took 10th place and the Cubans 11th. But the Estonians, led by Keres, who scored 14½ out of 19, were a sensational third, behind Germany and Poland! To the horror of Alekhine, and indeed all the players, at the very height of the tournament, just as a quarter of a century earlier in Mannheim, war broke out. Alekhine and Tartakower called for a boycott of the German team as a sign of protest against the attack by Nazi Germany on Poland, and the French and the Poles, and the Palestinians who joined with them, refused to play the Germans (in each case an arbitrary 2-2 score was recorded).

The subsequent tragic fate of the fourth world champion has been described in detail in chess literature, and therefore I shall only mention the most important points.

That same autumn in South America, through intermediaries, the slow-moving discussions about a return match with Capablanca were renewed. While things were being decided, Alekhine returned to Paris and joined the French Army as a military interpreter. In the summer of 1940, after the capitulation of France, Alexander and Grace Alekhine found themselves in German occupied territory. They dreamed of escaping via Portugal to America, where the Russian player might finally succeed in finding a common language with the Cubans – who could know that Capa had only eighteen months to live...

In the spring of 1941 the Germans allowed Alekhine to go to Lisbon, but at too high a price: without his wife and in exchange for a scandalous series of anti-Semitic articles *Jewish and Arian Chess*, published in France, Holland and Germany. To save the life and freedom of Grace, who, according to Alekhine's 'Swiss' son, was an American Jewess, the champion accepted the conditions of the Nazis: he returned to Prague and began playing in competitions of 'The Chess Union of Greater Germany'.

During the war years he played in sixteen tournaments, winning nine of them and sharing first place in four others. At one time he and Grace were ordered to live in Prague, and there in the winter of 1942/43 Alekhine nearly died of severe scarlet fever – by a strange coincidence, in the very same hospital where his friend Réti died of this disease in 1929. Recovering a little, he brilliantly won the April tournament Prague 1943: 1. Alekhine – 17 out of 19 (undefeated); 2. Keres – 14½ (the duel between the top two prize-winners ended in a draw).

The 50-year-old champion conducted the following game with enormous energy and youthful enthusiasm, exploiting the most varied tactical motifs in his deeply calculated combination.

Game 148

A.Alekhine-J.Podgorny

Prague 1943

Sicilian Defence B22

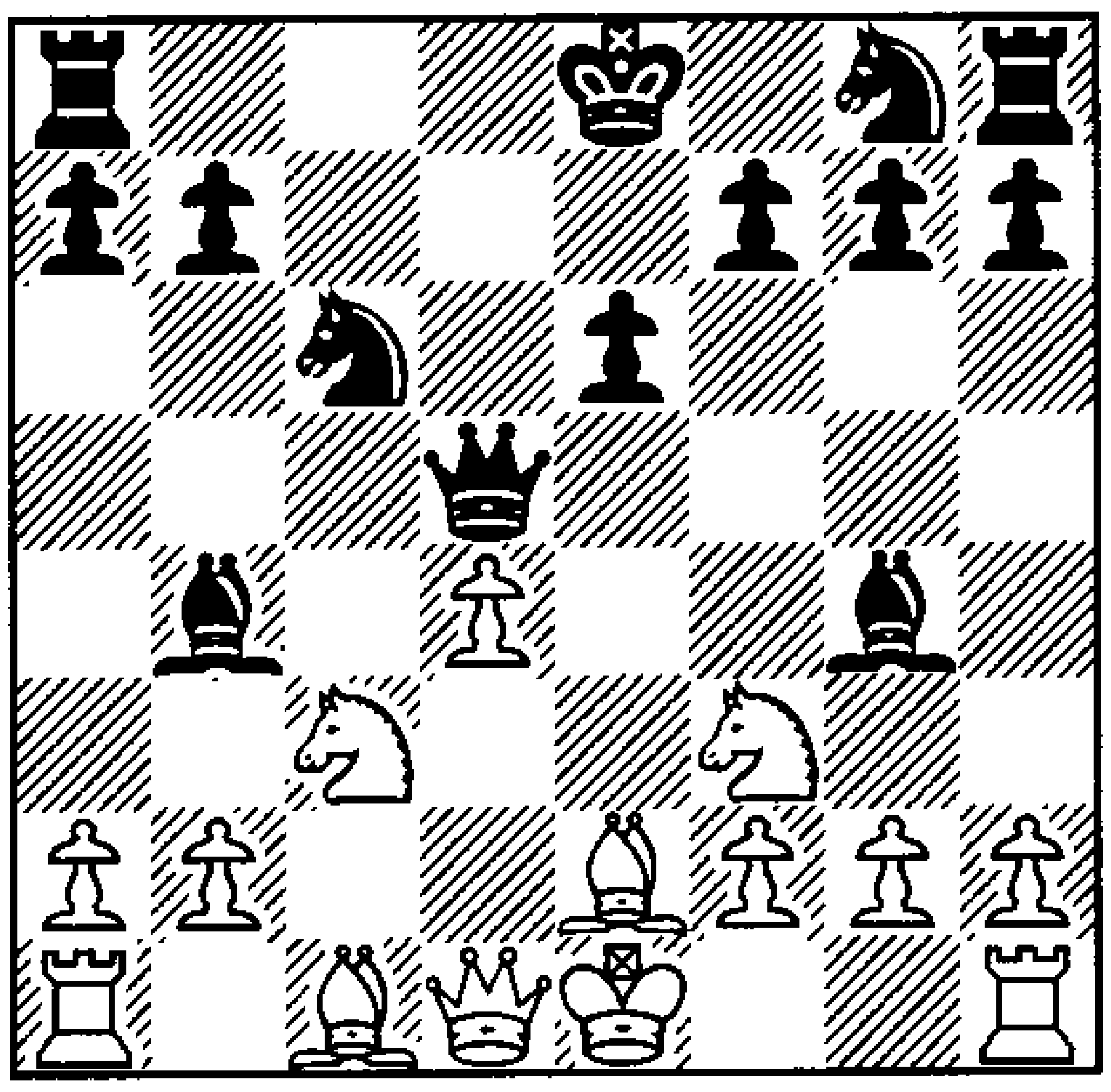
1 e4 c5 2 c3 d5 (nowadays the main reply is 2...♘f6) **3 exd5 ♕xd5 4 d4 ♘c6**

More accurate is 4...♘f6 5 ♘f3 ♗g4 6 ♗e2 e6, as I too have played – against Kramnik (Paris rapidplay 1994) and twice against Deep Blue (Philadelphia 1st and 3rd match-games 1996).

5 ♘f3 (moves such as 5 dxc5 are not in the style of the fourth world champion) **5...♗g4 6 ♗e2 cxd4**

'6...e6 7 h3 ♗h5 8 c4 and d4-d5 favours White.' (Alekhine)

7 cxd4 e6 8 ♘c3 ♗b4



8...♕a5!? 9 0-0 ♘f6 10 h3 ♗h5 11 a3 would have led to a position from the game Capablanca-Czerniak (Buenos Aires Olympiad 1939), which caused a sensation at the time and went 11...♖d8? 12 g4 ♗g6 13 b4! ♗xb4?! 14 axb4! ♕xa1 15 ♕b3 ♖xd4 16 ♗a3! ♗c2 17 ♕xc2 ♕xa3 18 ♘b5! and Black was spectacularly crushed. But clearly better was 11...♗e7 (or 11...♗d6) 12 ♗e3 0-0 13 b4 ♕d8, which became a *tabiya* at the end of the 20th century.

9 0-0 ♕a5

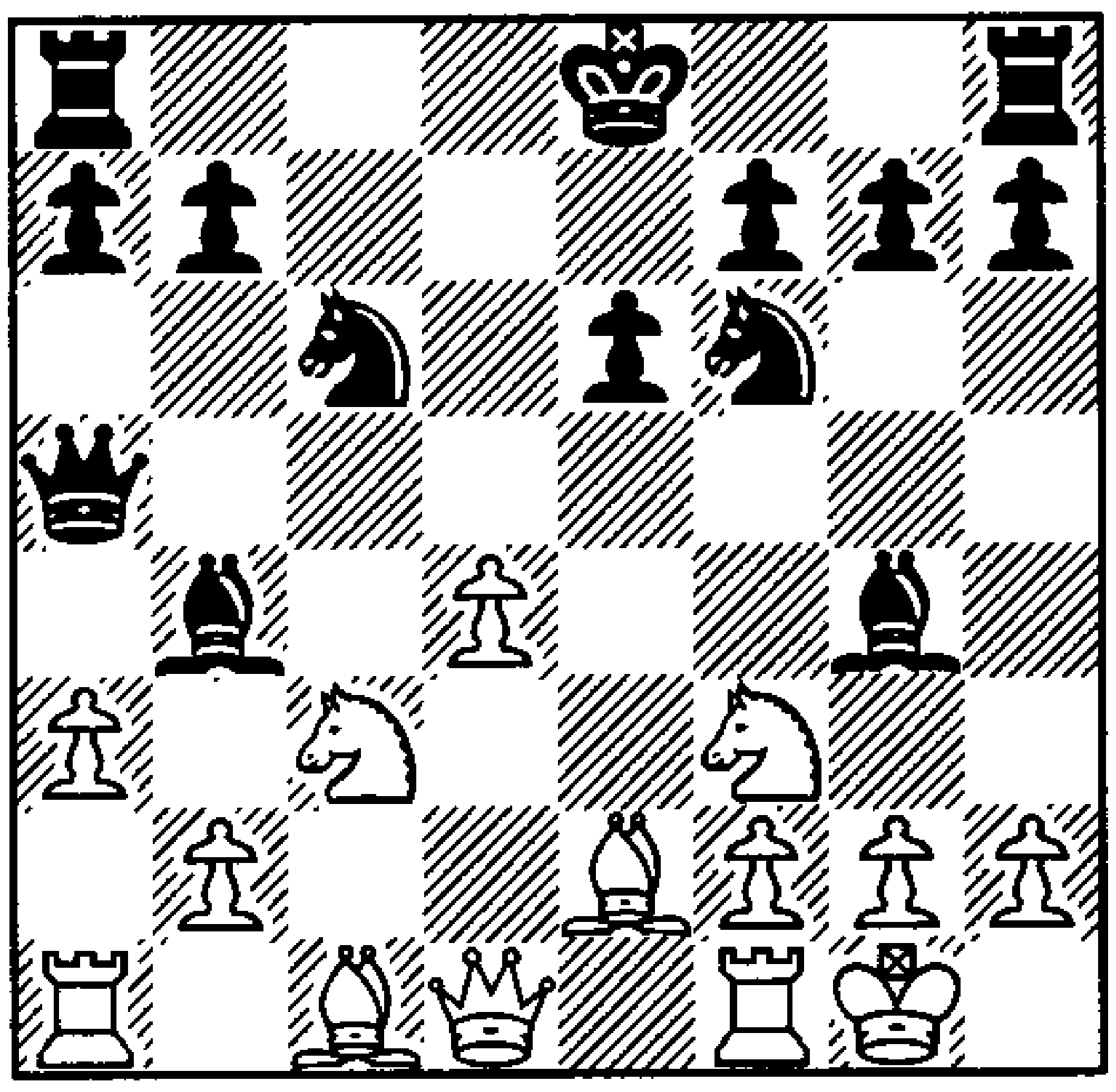
'A critical position. If White does not find the correct continuation, the weakness of his isolated pawn may subsequently cause him serious difficulties.' (Alekhine)

10 a3!

If 10 ♗d2 ♘f6 11 a3 Alekhine gives 11...♗e7! (inferior is 11...♗xc3 12 bxc3 ♘e4?! 13 ♗e1!) 12 ♘b5 ♕d8 13 ♖c1 0-0, 'and White has nothing concrete', while if 10 d5 – 10...♖d8 (but not 10...0-0-0?! 11 ♘g5!) 11 ♘g5 ♗f5! with a double-edged position, or even 10...exd5!? 11 ♕xd5 (11 ♘xd5 0-0-0) 11...♕xd5 (11...♗xc3!? 12 ♕e4+ ♗e6 13 bxc3 ♘f6) 12 ♘xd5 ♗d6 with an acceptable game.

Therefore White preferred to go along a purely combinative path, exploiting the current position of Black's king and queen.

10...♘f6?



A natural developing move... and the decisive mistake! Essential was 10...♗xc3 11 bxc3 ♘f6 or 11...♘ge7 with only a slightly inferior position. Whereas after the greedy 11...♕xc3? both 12 ♗d2 ♕b2 13 ♕a4! and 12 ♖b1 are strong, for example: 12...0-0-0 13 ♕a4 ♗xf3 14 ♗xf3 ♘ge7 15 ♕b5 ♖d7 16 ♗f4! ♕xd4? 17 ♗xc6 ♘xc6 18 ♕xc6+!, or 12...♘ge7 13

♖xb7 0-0 14 ♕a4! with irresistible threats.

For complete happiness Black only needs to castle, and Alekhine, exploiting the temporary lack of coordination of the enemy forces, launches a swift attack.

11 d5!

The opening of the e-file is the keystone of White's attack. 'The only way: after 11 axb4? ♕xa1 12 ♕b3 ♗xf3 13 ♗e3 ♕xf1+ 14 ♗xf1 ♗d5 15 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 16 b5 ♘ce7 and ...0-0 Black could still have defended.' (Alekhine) And in the event of 11 ♕b3 ♗xc3 12 ♕xb7 0-0 13 ♕xc6 (13 bxc3 ♖fc8!) 13...♗xf3 14 ♕xf3 (or 14 ♗xf3 ♖ac8 15 ♕d6 ♖fd8) 14...♗xd4 he altogether has nothing to complain of.

11...exd5

'After 11...♖d8 (or 11...0-0-0) there would have followed 12 ♕b3 with the threat of 13 axb4 ♕xa1 14 ♗e3, while if 11...♘xd5 – 12 ♘xd5 exd5 13 axb4! (*13 ♘d4!? – G. K.*) 13...♕xa1 14 ♕b3 ♗xf3 15 ♗g5! ♕xf1+ 16 ♗xf1 ♗e4 17 f3 winning a pawn in view of the lack of coordination of the black pieces.' (Alekhine) For example: 17...♗f5 18 ♕xd5 ♗e6 19 ♕e4 and 19...0-0? 20 ♗d3! g6 21 ♗f6 leads to a catastrophe on the dark squares.

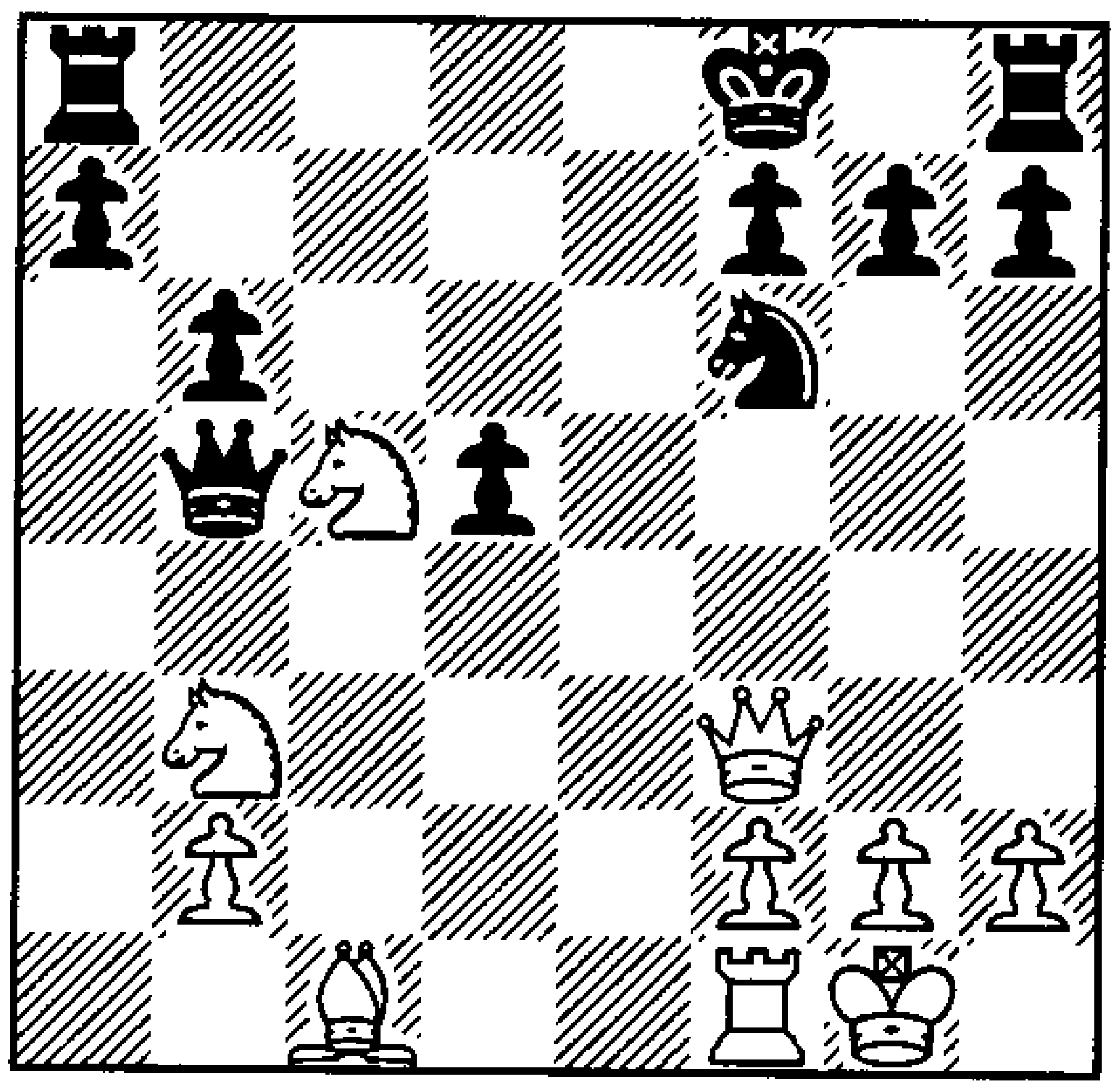
Also after 11...♗xf3 12 dxc6 ♗xe2 13 cxb7! ♖b8 (13...♖d8 14 axb4! wins) 14 axb4! ♕xa1 15 ♕xe2 'the black queen cannot escape from the trap.' (Kotov) More interesting is 12...♗xc6!? 13 axb4 ♕xa1 14 ♕c2, and here not the continuation mentioned by the commentators: 14...b5? 15 ♘xb5! (I should add 15...♔d7 16 ♗g5! or 15...0-0 16 ♕xc6 ♖ac8 17 ♘c7 ♘d5 18 ♕a6!), but 14...♘d5!? 15 b5 ♘b4 16 ♕b3 ♗xg2 17 ♔xg2 ♕a5 with hopes of prolonging the resistance somewhat.

12 axb4! ♕xa1 13 ♘d2!

Every soldier is at his post! The threat of ♘b3 forces the exchange of bishops, and the white queen comes into play with check, creating serious threats to the black king. The plan of trapping the queen by 13 ♕b3 is again pointless, this time in view of 13...♗xf3 14 ♗e3 (14 ♗g5? even loses: 14...♘d4!) 14...♕xf1+ 15 ♗xf1 d4! and after the series of exchanges White has no attack.

13...♗xe2 14 ♕xe2+ ♘e7

'If 14...♔f8, then 15 ♘b3 ♕a6 16 b5 ♕b6 17 ♘a4! ♘d4! 18 ♕d1!! (*but not 18 ♕d3? ♕xb5 – G. K.*) and White wins.' (Alekhine) This clever queen retreat (with a latent defence of the knight at a4: 18...♕xb5 19 ♘xd4) had to be foreseen when 11 d5! was played. Now Black loses his knight and, despite approximate material equality (rook and two pawns for knight and bishop), he remains with an incurably sick king. Let us try fantasising a little: 18...♘f3+ 19 ♕xf3 ♕xb5 20 ♘ac5 b6.



Analysis diagram

The white knights are again in difficulties, but the capture of the king is worth any sacrifices: 21 ♗h6!! ♔g8 (21...gxh6 22 ♕xf6 ♖g8 23 ♘e6+ ♔e8 24 ♘c7+ ♔e8 24 ♘c7+ and 25 ♘xb5) 22 ♘d4! ♕xc5 23 ♘f5 ♕c7 (23...g6 loses immediately: 24 ♕c3! ♕xc3 25 ♘e7 mate) 24 ♗xg7 ♕e5 25 ♗h6 with the same threat of 26 ♕g3+ ♕xg3 27 ♘e7 mate, and if 25...♖e8, then 26 ♕h3! and 27 f4 wins.

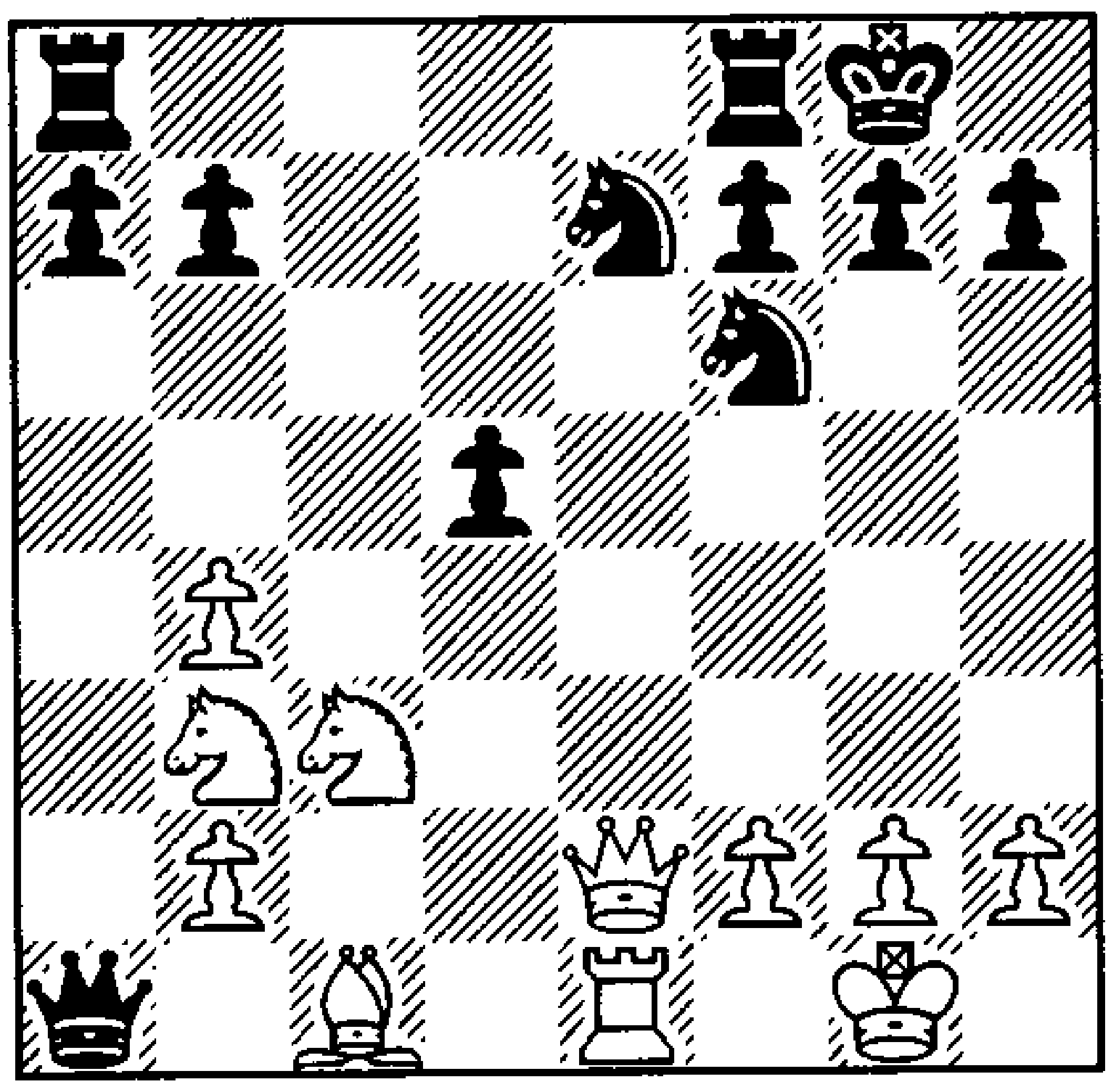
15 ♖e1! (according to Alekhine, '15 ♕b5+?! ♘d7 16 ♖e1 was more tempting but weaker because of 16...♔d8!') **15...0-0**

The only way of avoiding an immediate rout. The black king escapes, exploiting the fact that the knight is immune: 16 ♕xe7?? ♖fe8 wins.

Can it be that the pretty winning combination in the variation with 14...♔f8 was merely a mirage in the desert?

16 ♘b3!

The winning stroke! Now the white queen leaves the e-file with gain of tempo (by exchanging!) and the rook can very calmly pick up the knight.



16...♕a6 17 ♕xa6 bxa6 18 ♖xe7

White has a bishop and knight for a rook and Alekhine easily converts his material advantage.

18...♖ab8 (if 18...♖fb8, then 19 ♘a2 ♖e8 20 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 21 h3 is good) **19 b5!**

'This advance prevents the penetration of one of the black rooks into White's position.' (Alekhine)

19...axb5 20 ♖xa7 b4 21 ♘e2 ♖fc8 22 f3 ♖a8 (the black rooks have no scope: 22...♖c2 23 ♘bd4!) **23 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 24 ♔f2**

Sometimes in the endgame a rook and pawn are even stronger than a pair of minor pieces, but here this is not such a case: Alekhine's pieces coordinate excellently, and the white king comes into play with decisive effect, whereas its black opponent is forced to observe passively the destruction of its army.

24...♘d7 25 ♘f4 ♘b6 26 ♔e3 ♖c8 27 ♔d3 (with the threat of 28 ♗e3 ♘c4 29 ♗d4) **27...g5 28 ♘h5 1-0**

28...h6 29 ♗e3 ♘c4 30 ♘f6+ ♔f8 31 ♗c5+ ♔g7 32 ♗d4 wins.

Then there was Salzburg 1943: 1-2. Alekhine and Keres – 7½ out of 10... 4. Bogoljubow – 4. The last meeting of the two old friends and rivals – after their 1934 match Alekhine played 12 games with Bogoljubow with an overall score of +8 -2 =2.

At that time the champion several times invited the young Keres, who was also caught 'under the Germans', to play a match for the world championship. Keres declined, and Alekhine somewhat sarcastically commented: 'They all want to wait till I'm past 60.' But historians state that Paul 'rejected a match, not out of fear or calculation, but due to depression caused by the war.'

The Estonian master Walter Heuer adds: 'During the war Keres realised that, out of all the contenders for the chess crown, he alone had ended up "on the wrong side" and he endeavoured to survive that period with the minimum of damage, by avoiding a compromising match with Alekhine. Not too much significance should be added to his poor score (0-3) in their individual meetings in 1942 – Keres had been out of practice for a long time... In 1943 they played on equal terms, and in the event of a match the champion's undermined health could well have told.'

And indeed, according to Flohr the champion's health left much to be desired back in the 1935 match, where he was let down by his nervous system several times and where a Dutch doctor who examined him stated: 'I am afraid that Alekhine will not live for long, with his diseased heart... Nerves!'

In the autumn of 1943, at the invitation of the Spanish Chess Federation, the champion travelled to Madrid, and again alone: the Gestapo refused to allow his wife to leave. For about two years he played in small Spanish tournaments, gave simultaneous displays and gave lessons to the young Arturo Pomar, the future well-known grandmaster. He tried unsuccessfully to obtain permission for Grace to travel to Spain, and on the conclusion of the war he made equally unsuccessful attempts to return to Paris. From the USSR news reached him of the death of his elder sister (his brother had died back in 1939). In the autumn of 1945 he moved to the small Portuguese town of Estoril, where he had a good friend – Francisco Lupi.

'Suffering from loneliness and illness, the world champion was hoping to wait until the end of that dangerous time, when all over Europe they were seeking and judging war criminals and collaborators,' writes the well-known pianist Dmitry Paperno in his memoirs. 'You can imagine those months in the life of the great player: autumn and winter in foreign and provincial Estoril, the boom of the ocean, the half-empty hotel, where he was kept virtually on charity, no contact with his wife, despairing letters to former friends, in which he tried to justify himself. And all this on the background of high blood pressure (up to 280), impecunity and alcohol – that which remained from his rare payments for game commentaries and simultaneous displays, organised by Lupi, went on cognac.'

At the end of November came a ray of hope: the British Chess Federation sent Alekhine an invitation to their first post-war tournaments – in London and in Hastings. The inspired recluse sent his immediate agreement and began preparing. But then came the terrible news that, due to a protest by the American Chess Federation, the invitation had been cancelled! Alekhine had a heart attack... Gathering his thoughts, the champion sent a letter to the organisers of the London tournament (which was published in the *British Chess Magazine*, 1946 No.1 and, with a slightly different translation, in *Chess* 1946 No.1):

> The fact is that, in Germany and in occupied territory, we were under constant supervision and the threat of the concentration camp on the part of the Gestapo...
>
> I have played chess in Germany and occupied countries because this was our only means of livelihood, but also the price I paid for my wife's liberty.
>
> In these articles, which appeared in 1941 during my stay in Portugal, and which became known to me in Germany as reproduced in the *Deutsche Schachzeitung* there is nothing that was written by me.
>
> The matter which I had provided related to the necessary reconstruction of the International Chess Federation and to a critical appreciation, written long before 1939 of the theories of Steinitz and Lasker.
>
> I was astonished ... at the reaction which these purely technical articles had produced in America.
>
> It is only when I obtained knowledge of the perfectly stupid balderdash which emanated from a mind imbued with Nazi ideas, that I understood what was on foot. At that time I was a prisoner of the Nazis and our only chance was to keep silent before the whole world.
>
> The vapourings of the *Pariser Zeitung* were a fake.

One would like to believe Alexander Alexandrovich to the end, but chess historians have unearthed two interviews by the champion, published in the Spanish press on 3 September 1941, before his departure to the Munich tournament. In them Alekhine declared that 'in the newspaper *Pariser Zeitung* he first tried to examine chess from a racial viewpoint,' reported on his intention to read several lectures 'about Aryan and Semitic types of chess', and to the question, which chess players he admired, he replied: 'I must specially mention the greatness of Capablanca, who was called on to overthrow the Jew Lasker from the world chess throne.'

Truly 'What terrible times, what cruel people!' Four years later fascism vanished, like a terrible dream, but the champion was left empty-handed. 'Far-sighted and profound at the chessboard, in life Alekhine more than once demonstrated political short-sightedness,' Botvinnik was to say coldly and... he would obtain permission from the Kremlin for a match with the 'enemy of the people'. The world crown was at stake!

Early in March 1946 Alekhine received an official challenge from Botvinnik, dated 4th February. Of course, he immediately sent his agreement and through joy – life was returning to normal! – he suffered another heart attack... Through English intermediaries the players agreed that the match would take place in London. But on 24 March the chess world was stunned by the news of the sudden death of the 53-year-old champion, who was found in his room sitting immobile in a chair in front of a chessboard.

Alekhine's death was just as mysterious and tragic as his life. His son later hinted that 'the hand of Moscow touched his father', but in the official evidence it was said that 'Alekhine died as a result of asphyxiation due to the blocking of his larynx by a piece of meat,' although certain eye-witnesses asserted that, to judge by the calm expression on the deceased's face, 'this was not the main cause of death, but it had simply coincided with a heart attack.'

The fourth world champion was buried in Estoril. Ten years later, through the efforts of the faithful Grace, his remains were moved to Paris and interred in the Montparnesse cemetery. The inscription over the tombstone there reads: 'Alexandre Alekhine – Génie des échecs de Russie et de France.'

I will conclude, as usual, with a selection of original opinions by the world champions.

Lasker: 'Alekhine grew out of the combination. He is in love with it. Everything strategic is only a preparation for him, almost a necessary evil. The stunning blow, the unexpected thrust – this is his element... His imagination catches fire in the attack on the king.'

Capablanca: 'A typical Slav, fair-haired and blue-eyed, Alekhine always catches the attention when he appears in the tournament hall. He speaks six languages fluently, he has the degree of Doctor of Law and his general maturity is significantly higher than the level of the average person. Alekhine evidently possesses the most remarkable chess memory that has ever existed. It is said that he remembers by heart all the games played by the leading masters during the past 15-20 years.'

Euwe: 'As a person Alekhine was an enigma. He was focused on his chess and on himself to such a degree that in our countries he was jokingly called "Alein-ich" (in German "I am alone"). With such a frame of mind he could not have any real friends, only admirers and supporters. In his nature there was something childish... If Alekhine is regarded in this light, he can be forgiven for much: at the chessboard he was mighty, but away from chess, by contrast, he resembled a little boy, who played pranks and naively assumed that no one could see him.'

Botvinnik: 'Alekhine is dear to the chess world, mainly as an artist. Typical of him are deep plans, far-sighted calculation and inexhaustible imagination. However, his main strength, which developed from year to year, was his combinative vision: he saw combinations and calculated forcing variations with great ease and accuracy. For this reason Alekhine's combinations possessed such a staggering, crushing force... Yes, this truly was an amazing gift!'

Smyslov: 'The name of Alekhine is illuminated by the brilliance of his chess combinations. Alekhine possessed an exceptionally rich chess imagination, and his skill in creating combinative complications is incomparable. It should be mentioned that Alekhine had a mastery of technique, and his striving for combinations was not an end in itself, but stemmed logically from the demands of the position.'

Tal: 'In Alekhine we are captivated by his exceptional combinative talent and his whole-hearted love for chess.'

Spassky: 'I consider Alexander Alekhine to be a very great player. Possibly, because for me and for many he remains an enigma. He considered that chess was closest to an art, and he was able to demonstrate this with his optimistic, eternally youthful play.'

Fischer: 'Alekhine has never been a hero of mine, and I've never cared for his style of play. There's nothing light or breezy about it; it worked for him, but it could scarcely work for anybody else.

'He played gigantic conceptions, full of outrageous and unprecedented ideas. He had great imagination; he could see more deeply into a situation than any other player in chess history... Many consider Alekhine a great opening theoretician, but I don't think he was. He played book lines, but didn't know them very well. He always felt that his natural powers would get him out of any dilemma.'

Karpov: 'The next (after Steinitz) changes were outlined by Alekhine, but applied and developed by Botvinnik – the scientific approach to chess... Alekhine worked a great deal at home. He won a number of well-known games, by right from the opening holding his opponent in a vice prepared at home. And his grip was strong: after seizing his victim, he would no longer release him.'

In contrast to Fischer with his propensity for clarity, and to Karpov who grew up on Capablanca's games, from my early years I was enormously influenced by Alekhine's play and won over by his unprecedented feat in the 1927 match. I admired the refinement of his ideas, and I tried as far as possible to imitate his furious attacking style, with its sudden and thunderous sacrifices...

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